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BRITISH!

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Computer

active

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Learn something new in every issue

ULTIMATE HACKS FOR amazon

Secret deals and smarter gadgets



- ✓ Find the cheapest prices
- ✓ Discover hidden bargains
- ✓ Guarantee free delivery
- ✓ Free ebooks & audiobooks
- ✓ Skip ads without paying
- ✓ Download Prime Video TV
- ✓ Sideload apps from Google
- + Beat Fire Stick restrictions

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**ACCESS CLOUD STORAGE
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**WE'VE CANCELLED THESE
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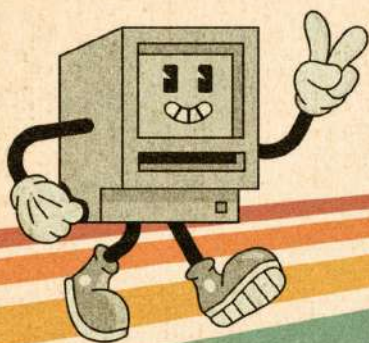
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The first item I bought on Amazon was David Icke's book *Children of the Matrix*, sometime in the early 2000s. In it he argues that an "interdimensional race has controlled the planet for thousands of years". Total twaddle, but I was researching an interview with him. I can't recall whether "customers also bought" turquoise tracksuits.

These days, Amazon is more likely to be described as controlling the planet, having grown into a manufacturing giant making tablets, streaming sticks, ebook readers, smart speakers and video doorbells.

I see this as a much more impressive

transformation than Google, which was, is and probably will always be primarily an advertising company.

Robert Irvine is also a fan, and in our Cover Feature explains the smartest ways to hack Amazon's services and products so they work better for you. It's a masterclass in finding bargains and beating restrictions, and will prove useful not just for Black Friday and Christmas but all year round. Either that, or I'm a shapeshifting reptile controlled by Alexa.

Daniel Booth

editor@computeractive.co.uk



THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

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Increase in O2's mid-contract price rises – p6

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Pages Canon's Maxify portable printer can print between charges – p25

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HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLS

We use snipcas to turn long URLs that are hard to type into ones that are short and simple. They aren't websites themselves, which means they won't be recognised if you type them into Google. Instead, you need to type them into your browser address bar, then press Enter. Doing this will take you to the correct website.

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Apple iPad Pro M5

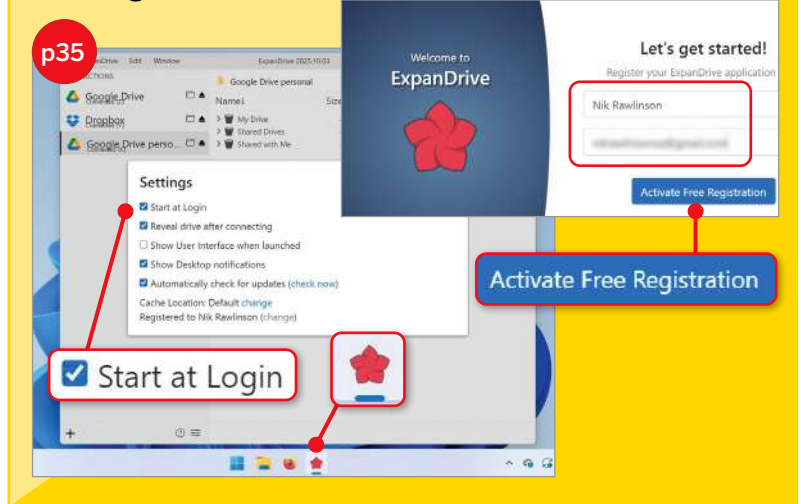
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Clouding the issue



ULTIMATE HACKS FOR amazon

COVER
FEATURE
P50

Secret deals and smarter gadgets

- ☒ Find the cheapest prices
- ☒ Skip ads without paying
- ☒ Discover hidden bargains
- ☒ Download Prime Video TV
- ☒ Guarantee free delivery
- ☒ Sideload apps from Google
- ☒ Free ebooks & audiobooks
- ☒ Beat Fire Stick restrictions

RUN WINDOWS 10 SAFELY

(even if you're online!)

p60

Keep Windows 10
in the running

O2 causes fury by raising prices by more than expected

O2 will raise prices in April 2026 by more than it had previously indicated, angering consumer groups, telecoms regulator Ofcom, the Government and MoneySavingExpert founder Martin Lewis.

In November 2024, O2 said it would increase prices by £1.80 in April 2025. This was in response to Ofcom's rules that phone and broadband price hikes should be stated in

"pounds and pence", rather than linked to inflation, so they could be easily understood by customers.

Customers signing up since would have agreed a contract that mentioned an annual £1.80 increase. But on 23 October, O2 said prices will instead rise by £2.50 (www.o2.co.uk/prices). The law gives it the right to do this as long as it allows customers the right to cancel for free.

Ofcom said it was "disappointed" by O2's decision and claimed it "goes against the spirit of our rules which are designed to ensure greater certainty and transparency for customers when they sign up".

Martin Lewis agreed, saying O2 was "making a mockery" of Ofcom's rules and warned that other companies "will feel less worried about following suit".

He has written an open letter to Chancellor Rachel Reeves calling for "swift action" to "protect customers", and said it was regrettable Ofcom didn't ban "all



above-inflation mid-contract price rises (or any mid-contract rises)".

The Government responded to the price rise by asking Ofcom to reconsider its rules.

In a letter to the regulator Technology Secretary Liz Kendall said she was "keen" to look at "in-contract price rises again".

Citizens Advice went further. Tom MacInnes, director of policy at the charity, said "the time has come for the regulator to banish mid-contract price rises for good".

Ofcom said it shared the

Government's concern that "customers who face price rises must be treated fairly by mobile providers".

Cancel your contract

O2 acknowledged that price changes are "never welcome" but said demand for mobile connectivity is "greater than ever".

It added that "any price change customers see on their bills is greatly outweighed by the £700m we invest each year into our mobile network".

O2 has written to customers, giving them 30 days to cancel without a penalty.

The only O2 customers not affected by the price rise are those on its Essential Plan social tariff, which is for people on benefits. This costs £10 a month for 10GB of data and unlimited calls and texts (www.snipca.com/56973).

 Will you cancel your O2 contract? Let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

WHAT WE THINK

This rise was entirely foreseeable. In fact, Issue 689's 'Question of the Fortnight' asked, 'Will Ofcom's inflation-linked ban lead to higher prices?'. A jump of 70p to £2.50 is a punishing 39 per cent. Not even during the post-Covid days of double-digit inflation did prices rise that much. In reality, competition does more than regulation to keep prices low. If Ofcom insists on interfering, it should make switching networks easier.

VODAFONE AND THREE ALSO HIKE MID-CONTRACT INCREASES

Vodafone and Three have announced mid-contract price increases for April 2026, though they only affect new and renewing customers who signed up after 9 November.

They are the company's first "pounds and pence" increases

under Ofcom's new rules.

Vodafone's fixed broadband packages will rise £3.50 a month (up from £3), while **SIM-Only Basics** plans will rise by £1.50 (up from £1).

Other SIM-Only products such as phone airtime and mobile

broadband will rise by £2.50 (up from £1.80).

Three's 4GB plan will rise by £1.80 (up from £1), while all 5GB to 99GB plans will rise by £1.90. For more than 100GB the increase is £2.30 a month.



You'll like this...

Phone networks will block foreign scammers impersonating banks (www.snipca.com/56968)



but not this...

One in five Brits lost money in scams in past 12 months (www.snipca.com/56969)

Amazon warns users to stop using illegal Fire TV Stick apps

Amazon will soon start warning Fire TV Stick users to stop using illegal apps that let them watch paid-for content for free, such as Premier League football and movie channels. If users keep using the app Amazon will block it.

Amazon will reportedly consult a 'blocklist' of apps maintained by the anti-piracy organisation Alliance for Creativity and Entertainment, which includes Amazon, BBC Studios, Disney, Netflix and Paramount. However, it's not known which apps are on the list.

It's the first time Amazon has blocked apps that let users access copyrighted content. The warnings will begin in France and Germany before being rolled out globally.

Amazon said the move is part of a "global coalition



fighting digital piracy". This is why its latest device – the Fire TV 4K Select – prevents users from **sideloading** apps (see page 55).

In early November, police raided homes across England where they suspected people of selling 'cracked' Fire TV Sticks.

Working with the Federation Against Copyright Theft (FACT), they targeted addresses in Cheshire, Derbyshire, Greater Manchester, Kent, Lincolnshire, London,

Merseyside, East and West Midlands, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Northumbria, Staffordshire and North Yorkshire.

Several sellers have been jailed this year, including qualified accountant Nishan Silva, 34, from Hitchin, who made £250,000 selling illegal devices. He's now serving three years in prison after being sentenced in October.

Kieron Sharp, chief executive of FACT, said: "If you're supplying or using illicit streaming devices or illegal IPTV subscriptions, take this as a clear warning: you are breaking the law and risk facing serious consequences."

He told those streaming illegally that as well as committing a crime they're at risk of installing malware from the cracked sticks.

BT customers to get satellite broadband from Elon Musk's Starlink

BT has teamed up with Starlink to provide internet connections to homes in remote areas where traditional broadband cables can't reach.

Starlink, owned by Elon Musk, is the biggest Low Earth Orbit (LEO) constellation of satellites, with 8,900 offering internet access across the world. Using a small dish, users can get online with speeds up to 280Mbps.

BT says it'll offer Starlink dishes to areas where "traditional fixed-line infrastructure is economically unviable or geographically challenging to build" (www.snipca.com/56959).

It will also be available to EE home broadband customers, and will launch in the second



half of 2026.

BT didn't say how much the service would cost, but Starlink currently charges £75 a month (www.snipca.com/56960).

It also normally charges £299 for the kit (dish, router, power supply and cables), though it is currently running a promotion that supplies

this for free.

Starlink has also signed a deal with International Airlines Group to supply internet to more than 500 planes, including many run by British Airways, Aer Lingus and Iberia.



Do you use satellite broadband? Let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

IN BRIEF

NEW USB STICK THE SIZE OF A CUFFLINK

SanDisk has launched a USB stick so small you can keep it permanently attached to your computer



with little risk of damaging it. The Extreme Fit USB-C Flash Drive (pictured) measures 18.5x15.7x13.6mm (HxWxD) – about the size of a cufflink. Prices range from £9.99 (64GB) to £86.99 (1TB) – buy from www.snipca.com/56956.

UPDATE POWERTOYS TO DISABLE LIGHT SWITCH

Microsoft has released a PowerToys update that turns off Light Switch – a new tool in version 0.95 that automatically switches your computer between light and **dark mode**. Microsoft said it was accidentally turned on by default, confusing users whose PCs switched mode without warning. Install the new update (0.95.1) from within PowerToys – or download from www.snipca.com/56961.

TOMORROW'S WORLD



Made by Oxford University scientists, this is a 'fluidic' robot that moves using only air pressure – no electronics, motors or computers. We're not entirely sure what they'll be used for, but it currently does a good impression of a mackerel trying to flip itself back into the sea (www.snipca.com/56951).



IN BRIEF

COMPARE APPS IN REVAMPED APPLE STORE

Apple has revamped its online App Store to let you browse and compare iPhone,

iPad and Mac apps without using an Apple device. Visit <https://apps.apple.com> then search for an

app (1 in our screenshot) or click the menu (2) to filter by device. You'll still need an Apple device to download an app.

USE AFFINITY PHOTO FOR FREE 'FOREVER'

Canva has made its entire Affinity suite free, combining the Designer, Photo and Publisher tools into one program. Previously these cost £60 each. Canva says it's "free forever" and won't require a subscription, but you'll need a Canva account. Read more at www.snipca.com/56943. We'll explain how to edit photos using Affinity in our next issue.

THE WORLD'S GONE MAD!



This is the Empire Family, who have 'fled' Australia because of its ban on under-16s using social media. Apparently, their 14-year-old daughter Charlotte just loves posting online too much. They now live in London, where they'll continue to share their life on YouTube with nearly two million subscribers. Lucky us.



Credit Empire Family/Instagram

HIBP adds biggest ever stash of stolen emails and passwords

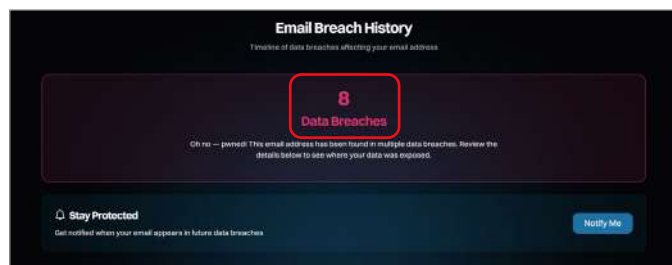
Have I Been Pwned (HIBP) has added its biggest ever collection of stolen logins, containing nearly two billion passwords and usernames.

Writing online, HIBP's founder Troy Hunt said the precise figures are 1,957,476,021 unique email addresses and 1.3 billion unique passwords, 625 million of which it had never published before.

He said it's "the most extensive corpus of data we've ever processed, by a significant margin" (www.snipca.com/56947).

It was collated by US security firm Synthient on the dark web and through messaging apps. Hunt has called the new release Synthient Credential Stuffing Threat Data.

To check whether your email is included, visit <https://>



haveibeenpwned.com, type your address at the top and press Enter. This will search the whole of HIBP's database.

HIBP will then show how many data breaches it's been found in (see screenshot), with details on the same page. You can do the same for passwords at www.snipca.com/56948.

It's safe to enter your email address and password because HIBP has no way of knowing which are used together to sign into accounts.

Hunt also confirmed that the data had nothing to do

with any security vulnerabilities in Gmail, despite many websites reporting this.

Since launching in 2013 HIBP has amassed details from 17.2 billion personal accounts that have been leaked from 918 websites.

It has added more than 60 collections of data in 2025 so far, including breaches from Taiwanese PC manufacturer MSI, ad-blocking tool Pi-hole and even Troy Hunt's own mailing list (www.snipca.com/54351).

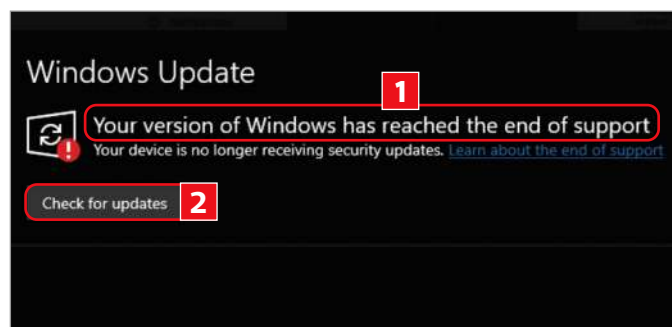
Windows 10 error says you're unsafe even with extended support

Microsoft has admitted that a botched update tells Windows 10 users their computer is unsupported even if it's been enrolled into the Extended Security Updates (ESU) scheme.

The message 'Your version of Windows has reached the end of support' (1 in our screenshot) appears in the Windows Update page in Settings and prevents you from clicking the 'Check for updates' button (2).

Microsoft said that the problem affects computers running Windows 10 22H2 Pro, Education or Enterprise editions.

It didn't explain what caused the error, but confirmed that



users who have enrolled in the ESU scheme should ignore the message because they will continue to receive updates. It's working on a fix that should remove the message soon.

You can sign up for free ESUs at www.snipca.com/55995, though you'll

need to back up and sync files to OneDrive.

You can avoid using OneDrive by paying for ESUs – it costs \$30 (£25) for a year's support. Microsoft plans to axe ESUs in October 2026.

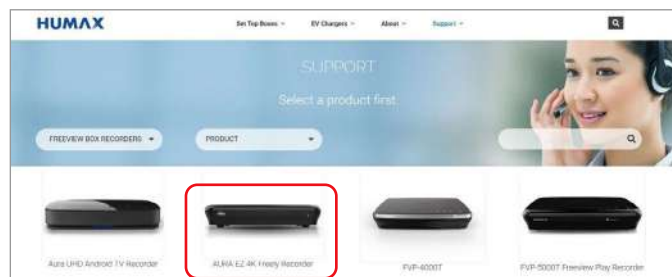
• Hell 'freezes over' as Microsoft renames Windows updates – page 49

Humax confirms Freely recorder – and it might arrive by Xmas

Humax has confirmed that its Freely TV recorder will be called the Aura EZ 4K Freely Recorder.

The device first appeared on several UK retail websites in early October as the Humax FHR-6000T, priced £249. Some sites quickly took it down, though it remains listed at BJs Electrical (www.snipca.com/56555) and Kings & Barnhams (www.snipca.com/56556).

Then in late October Humax



itself briefly listed the Aura EZ 4K Freely Recorder (pictured) and later told the website Cordbusters it was “under internal testing and

development”.

Humax soon removed the listing, but the device appears to be a renamed version of the Humax FHR-6000T. The listing said support for the device would “start from the date of initial supply as of December 1, 2025”, suggesting it might arrive in time for Christmas.

After Humax removed the listing it told Cordbusters that “preliminary images of an upcoming product were unintentionally made visible”.

Humax hasn't confirmed whether the device can record channels both broadcast via an aerial and streamed over the internet.

NEW SMART TVs YOU CAN MAKE 'DUMB'

Mitchell & Brown has announced new smart TVs with a 'dumb' mode that lets you disable all streaming apps.

The Bolton-based manufacturer says a “huge number” of customers were “asking for a way to make our brilliant TiVo OS TVs behave just like the reliable televisions of old”.

The TVs let you skip turning on Wi-Fi, then hides all the web-connected options. This lets you watch only traditional broadcast channels instead of Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ and Netflix.

The TVs are on sale now at independent stores throughout the UK – read more at www.snipca.com/56937.

Louvre used 'Louvre' as video password, report into theft reveals

The Louvre Museum in Paris reportedly used the password 'Louvre', according to an investigation into the theft of French crown jewels in October.

Journalists at French newspaper *Libération* say that a 2014 audit of the museum's security systems showed that 'Louvre' was the password for its video-surveillance system.

Thieves stole €88m worth of jewels (around £76m), including earrings and a necklace owned by Napoleon's second wife Empress Marie-Louise.

A further audit in 2025 found “serious shortcomings”

in other parts of the museum's systems, including security software that was more than two decades old and no longer supported.

The Louvre also used the password 'Thales' for security software made by a company of the same name.

Security experts expressed astonishment that the Louvre used such simple passwords, adding that they're so obvious hackers might not even bother to try them.

However, it's not known whether the thieves used these passwords in their raid.

Four robbers climbed a



mechanical ladder attached to a small truck parked next to the museum, then used power tools to break into the gallery from the second floor. The theft took just eight minutes.

Seven suspects have been arrested but the stolen jewels haven't been recovered.

IN BRIEF



UK VISITS TO PORNHUB PLUMMET

Pornhub has said visits from people in the UK have fallen by 77 per cent since the introduction of age-checking rules in July. However, use of VPNs in the UK has soared, suggesting many Brits are simply disguising their location to access Pornhub. It's the world's biggest porn site and the 19th most-visited on the entire web.

EUFY RELEASES NEW HYBRID SECURITY CAM

Eufy has released what it claims is the world's first solar-powered hybrid camera – meaning it combines a fixed 4K lens with two 2K pan-tilt-zoom (PTZ) lenses. It's called the EufyCam S4 (pictured) and costs £249 from www.snipca.com/56931. We'll review it soon.



CHROME TO WARN ABOUT HTTP SITES

From October 2026 Chrome will warn you when you're about to visit a site that uses an old, unsafe HTTP web address, rather than HTTPS. Chrome already warns that 'Your connection is not private' when you visit a site that doesn't use HTTPS properly. Google said the change will happen with the launch of Chrome version 154. Read more on Google's blog: www.snipca.com/56930.

Question of the Fortnight

How did 239 malicious apps end up on Google Play Store?

It's part of a huge rise in malware targeting Android devices

If a high-street store was caught selling a couple of hundred faulty products that were found to steal your money, the resulting loss of trust would probably bankrupt it. Yet the revelation that 239 malicious apps were listed on the Play Store – and had been downloaded 42 million times – will do little to dent Google's popularity.

The apps were discovered by US security firm Zscaler between June 2024 and May 2025 (www.snipca.com/56975). It only named a handful, but said many were listed in the Tools category of the Play Store, masquerading as apps to boost productivity: file managers, document scanners, calculators, converters, to-do lists and junk cleaners.

“Some of the apps ran malware that stole logins for bank accounts and Google Wallet”

It added that staff who work both at home and in the office need to trust such apps. But they're also the kind of apps that many *Computeractive* readers use. You don't have to be a busy executive to want to open PDFs on your phone, or sort multiple downloads into categories. They all looked genuine – would you have noticed anything dodgy about the malicious app pictured right?

Some of the apps ran malware that stole logins for bank accounts and mobile-payment services such as



Google Wallet. Others were adverts that earned their creators money every time they were clicked. Zscaler said the apps were part of a 67-per-cent yearly growth in malware targeting Android devices.

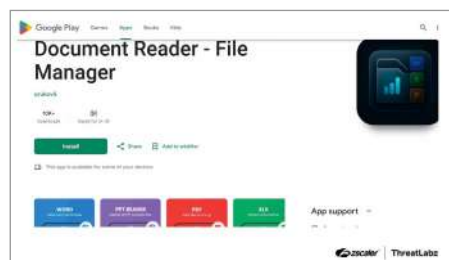
So what's gone wrong with the Play Store? Chiefly, hackers are getting better at

The potential solution sounds simple: Google should impose tighter restrictions on the apps they permit. It's estimated that at least 1,500 new apps get listed on the Play Store every day, contributing to a total of around 3.5 million. Is it really possible for Google to check every single one? And if not, then should it actually be hosting them?

But many users like that the Play Store is more relaxed, especially compared with Apple's App Store. You're more likely to find 'hacky' apps like advert blockers, system tweekers and torrent downloaders.

It's a classic tech trade-off. Google Play Store is less secure than Apple's, but offers a greater variety of apps – particularly those that perform

controversial tasks. For this trade-off to work, the public must buy into it. And that's what Google relies on. It knows enough people will accept the risk because they think the apps are worth it.



This was one of the malicious apps, but would you have spotted anything amiss?

THE FACTS

- Security researchers discovered that 239 malicious apps on the Google Play Store were downloaded 42 million times
- They added its part of a 67-per-cent annual increase in Android malware
- Google now forces app developers to verify their identity with government-approved details

It also knows there's very little chance of being fined for hosting malicious apps. That's because the law has also bought into this trade-off. Regulators accept Google's argument that it's impossible to check every app manually. Imagine a supermarket trying to use that excuse if caught selling out-of-date food. Google gets away with this because legally the Play Store isn't a store at all, but merely a 'platform' where other companies list their products.

To its credit Google does recognise it has a problem. App developers creating new Play Store accounts must now verify their identity with personal info, a government ID and a registration fee. In 2026, these rules will be applied to developers who make apps for **sideloading** on to Android devices.

We'll know this time next year whether these rules have worked. For now though, never install anything from the Play Store unless you're completely convinced it's safe.

Protect **your tech**

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

Fake LastPass ‘have you died?’ emails

What’s the threat?

Scammers are sending fake alerts that claim a LastPass user has died. The emails are being sent to LastPass users from **alerts[@]lastpass** and have the subject line ‘Legacy Request Opened (Urgent If You Are Not Deceased)’ – **1** in our screenshot. They add that a “death certificate was uploaded by a family member to regain access to the Lastpass account” **2**, followed by the account in question **3** (redacted in our screenshot).

The scammers know you haven’t died, so the email continues: “If you have not passed away and you believe this is a mistake, please reply to this email with ‘STOP’” **4**. It also asks you to cancel your relative’s alleged request by visiting the website ‘lastpassrecovery’ and entering your master password.

LastPass says the attacks come from the criminal gang CryptoChameleon, which previously used LastPass in a

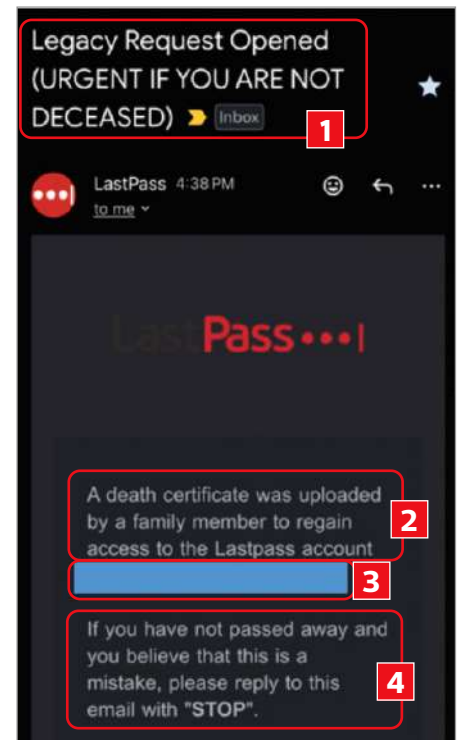
scam campaign in April 2024.

How can you stay safe?

LastPass does let family members request access to the account of relatives who have died or are physically incapacitated. The feature is called Emergency Access (www.snipca.com/56863) and when you set it up you have to nominate those you want to have access to it.

But LastPass will never email you to check whether you actually have died, nor ask for your master password for any reason. If a scammer asks for one, whether by email, text or phone, email the details to **abuse@lastpass.com**.

Also, while this attack specifically targets LastPass users, similar scams could target the emergency-request features of other password managers – so remain alert no matter which service you use. For more details on the scam read LastPass’s blog at www.snipca.com/56859.



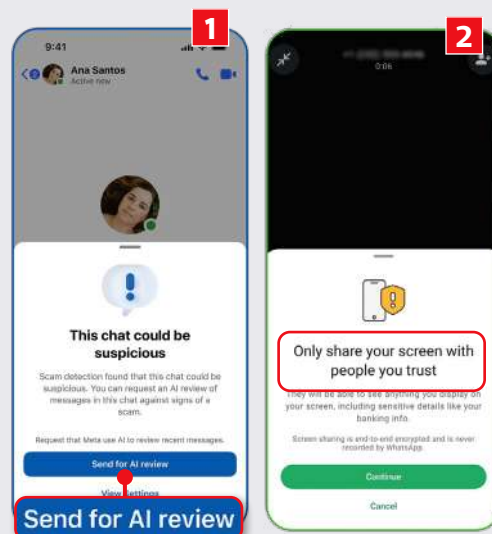
Credit: LastPass

New tools

Scam warnings on Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp

In Issue 722 (page 60) we were highly critical of Meta’s new tricks for tracking what you do, and explained which settings to disable. But it’s only fair we applaud it for new features to keep you safe on Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp.

On the former, if a contact sends a “potentially scammy” message, you’ll be able to check it using Meta’s ‘AI review’ (see screenshot **1**). On WhatsApp, you’ll be warned when you attempt to share your screen with an unknown contact during a video call **2**. Scammers sometimes use video chats to pressure victims into giving away sensitive information, such as bank details or **two-factor authentication** (2FA) codes.



Visit Meta’s site for more information on the warnings, including recent scams it has detected: www.snipca.com/56802.

ScamWatch

Readers warn readers

Never heard of ‘royalmail’!

I once fell for a courier scam during Covid, so I’m especially wary of them now. I received one recently in the form of a text supposedly from Royal Mail saying my parcel had been “temporarily held due to an unclear or invalid delivery address”. That sounds plausible enough, and it has urgency: “To avoid return or disposal, please verify your address within 24 hours”. But it’s signed ‘royalmail Customer Service’. Note the lower-case ‘r’ and ‘m’. That was a giveaway, so I deleted it. I never trust any courier messages these days, even though some I’ve received must be genuine.

Colin Morton



Warn your fellow readers about scams at letters@computeractive.co.uk

Letters

Tell us what's on your mind

Even ChatGPT agrees its new browser will fail

 In your comment on ChatGPT's new browser Atlas (Issue 722, page 6) you said 'Very few people will ever pay to browse the web'. Couldn't agree more. Indeed, it occurred to me that ChatGPT might also agree, so I asked it. And it was even more emphatic than you: "Almost nobody's going to pay to browse the web – especially when the normal web already works fine and browsers like Chrome, Edge and Firefox are free, fast and familiar. Most people don't want an AI middleman between them and their favourite sites; they just want their tabs, bookmarks and search bar to work."

I'm not against the idea of a ChatGPT browser. I certainly could do with an alternative to Chrome and Edge. But every tool in it has to be free. It would be eternally frustrating to start browsing and hop from site to site, only to have that browsing disturbed by constant requests for payment.

Mark Schofield

CA SAYS We stand by our first impressions of Atlas. If OpenAI makes its best tools paid-for then it will only be used by a handful of AI obsessives in Silicon Valley. Almost everyone else will stick with the browser they currently use. We'll take a closer look at Atlas when the Windows version arrives.

Computeractive must stand up to AI dominance

 In the UK we are increasingly coming under attack from scammers, and this is only going to increase with AI. Yet your publication seems to be going out of its way to praise AI. We need up-to-date advice on how best to protect ourselves and our families. At the moment, one in 10 people in the



UK are being scammed with the help of AI. Within a year it will be one in five.

If AI is so good, why has the Government's fraud department issued new guidelines to everyone to keep written backups of data they hold? And are you also aware that OpenAI is now being taken to court for helping people to commit suicide? It's just another form of online bullying.

AI software is only as good as the data a human has inserted and to think differently is living in a fool's paradise. You have a responsibility to the greater good of your readers. We need your help to combat this threat to our very existence.

Leslie Ardern

CA SAYS Leslie's right that criminals are using AI to create more convincing scams than ever before. The technology lets them impersonate voices and faces (of both celebrities and loved ones) and craft personalised emails that match the tone and content of companies.

AI also poses many other dangers, especially if we trust it to make moral decisions that should remain in human hands. But when used correctly AI has incredible potential to improve lives. It's already led to breakthroughs in medical research, and will diagnose illnesses much faster.

We're also seeing the impact in computing, with more advanced software and faster processing. That said, there's

no doubt tech giants are prone to exaggerating the benefits. We'll continue to promote AI where it can genuinely help readers, but also expose overhyped nonsense.

Don't over-regulate AI

 I was interested in Ron Hammil saying ChatGPT should place more detailed and clearer warnings about how to use it safely (Letters, Issue 720). The problem is that irrespective of what warnings are included, people will still choose to ignore them, much as they agree to terms and conditions in policy documents. The real winners here are the legal teams who draft the statements to minimise legal action, or take action against ChatGPT by bringing a case for something adverse that has occurred.

We are at risk of over-regulation on everything and the consequence of this is that it will stifle innovation. Thankfully, times were different when Tim Berners-Lee created the internet. The other issue with regulation is that all the best intentions appear to amount to nothing, as there will always be loopholes to exploit, such as using VPNs. Regulation is suggested too often as a solution. Let OpenAI improve ChatGPT's responses rather than spend resources regulating it.

Nick Symes

My Zorin-Windows strategy is ideal

 I wasn't surprised to read that Zorin downloads shot up on the

What's the Issue...?

 I'm thinking of buying the Ring Outdoor Battery Plus security camera, but want to re-read your review first. When did you publish it?

Terry Ball

CA SAYS That was in Issue 712, page 26. Buy a back issue from www.snipca.com/56871.

 I've just bought a new car with an unfamiliar USB port and need help. When did you explain how to use these?

Eric Austin

CA SAYS In Issue 714 'Hack your car's USB port' feature (page 60). Buy a back issue from www.snipca.com/56872.

 I recall a comprehensive feature on wiping junk from your PC. When was that?

Charles Graham

CA SAYS You probably mean Issue 681's Cover Feature 'Remove all PC junk safely'. Read it on our 2024 Back Issue USB Stick: www.snipca.com/53180.

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If we are unable to resolve your complaint, or if you would like more information about IPSO or the Editors' Code, contact IPSO on 0300 123 2220 or visit www.ipso.co.uk





day Microsoft ended support for Windows 10 (Issue 722, page 7). This makes more sense than the inexplicable rise in Windows 7's use that you reported in the previous issue.

I actually started using Zorin (pictured above) in 2020 when Windows 7 support ended. I installed it on my Acer laptop, which had been running Windows 7, and bought a new laptop to run Windows 10. I've found this the ideal scenario – run Zorin on an old laptop, and use the latest version of Windows on a new machine.

In August, knowing Windows 10 support was about to end, I installed Zorin on the Windows 10 laptop I bought in 2020 and purchased a new one with Windows 11. If this is a five-yearly cycle, I'll make a note to do the same in 2030!

Roger Hartley

CA SAYS Zorin was built to resemble Windows, so it's undoubtedly the best Linux **distro** for users switching from Windows 10. We'll explain how to use it in full in our next issue – out Wednesday 3 December. In the meantime, please let us know if you've switched to a different version of Linux.

Amazon drivers dump parcels in reception

I read with interest Malcolm Blyth's enquiry about refusing deliveries that arrive late (Consumeractive, Issue 721). My wife and I live in independent living with 80 apartments. We get deliveries from someone here nearly every day.

The problem arises, mostly with Evri and Amazon, when the drivers just dump the parcels in reception. One delivery was



STAR LETTER

You made a strong case for eSIMs, but I'm sticking with cards

I take Daniel Booth's point that he finds **SIM** cards fiddly to insert (Issue 722, page 3). But I suppose my fingers are less clumsy than his, because it's always been easy for me. In contrast, having to scan **QR codes** and navigate numerous settings to set up an **eSIM** seems like a hassle. With everything becoming digital, I'm happy to stick with something physical like a card.

So, while Issue 722's Cover Feature (pictured) made a strong case in favour of eSIMs, I'm going to stick with **SIM** cards. Not enough of the benefits you highlighted apply to me. If I ran a small business I could see why multiple numbers on an eSIM would be useful, but I've been retired for years and I'm content with one number, one card.



You also mentioned how eSIMs can cut **roaming fees**. If along with my hypothetical small business I also travelled abroad several times a year, then this would be attractive. But I've not been abroad since before Covid and don't have any plans to do so. Finally, you say eSIMs protect users from **SIM-swap** scams. This may be true, but criminals have to steal your phone first. I'm rarely reckless enough to use mine in public, and never leave it on a table for anyone to grab, so I doubt I'll fall victim.

Eventually I may have no choice, because you make it sound like phone manufacturers are abandoning cards completely. But I hope it'll be many years yet.

Vic Smith



The **Star Letter** writer wins a **Computeractive** mug!

left outside in the rain. Amazon doesn't care and just sends you a new package and Evri is impossible to contact. The articles ordered are usually needed as most people here are elderly. My wife and I have had deliveries left on the doorstep and only know it's there when we get a text to say it's been delivered.

Stephen Hubbard

Why DVDs beat streaming

I must disagree with John Ryan (Letters, Issue 720) who said ditching streaming for DVD players "feels like a step backwards". I have a large collection of DVDs, but mainly use them as backups. I've copied them to my home network and access them via a local media server – this is currently Plex (www.plex.tv), but I'm exploring Emby (<https://emby.media>). Why should I pay rising streaming fees, often with adverts, to enrich large corporations? I prefer to 'pay once and use many times' rather than 'pay many times and use once'.

Many local charity shops sell DVDs for as little as 10p and deserve our support.

Robert Togneri

Broken DVDs cost me a lifetime of photos

Colin Gleave says the lifespan of a DVD is unknown (Letters, Issue 721). I have seven photo DVDs of our children growing up and from our eldest daughter's wedding in 2002. I decided to show my grandchildren these photos, but the DVDs wouldn't work. I cleaned them but it didn't help – and nor did using the software Recuva or Windows tool Chkdsk.

I recommend anyone who has personal photos on DVD to copy them to an external hard drive or USB stick and to make extra backups. These are precious memories and hard to replace. I was quoted £900 to check only whether the photos *can* be recovered. I could pay that, but there's no guarantee of success. I'd have to pay more to actually recover them.

Harry Connell



We stand up for your legal rights

Is courier to blame for not leaving parcel in my safe place?

Q I recently ordered an item from Amazon just before going on a two-week holiday, and gave instructions for the courier to leave it in my safe place behind a garden wall. They've done this several times before, with no problems. The area is sheltered and secure. However, this time the courier left it *in front* of the wall, which meant it was exposed to the elements. When I came home the parcel was soaked and the product inside ruined. Who's to blame for this?

Peter McIntyre

A The courier is to blame, but Peter's contract is with Amazon, so he should contact it to explain what happened. He should take a photo of the parcel to prove where it was placed and how badly it's been damaged. He should also present evidence of the instructions he provided for delivery. Hopefully, these will prove precise enough to show that the courier was at fault for leaving the parcel in front of the wall.

If Amazon agrees that the courier was



to blame then it has to either refund Peter or send a replacement. But if it challenges Peter's account – or argues that he shouldn't have designated a safe place given that he wouldn't be at home for two weeks – then he'd have to take it to the small claims court (although this is worth doing only if the product is extremely valuable).

Peter's case highlights the risk of agreeing to safe places for deliveries. Only use them if you're totally confident the parcel won't be stolen or damaged. And no matter how clear your instructions are, it's certainly risky to leave them uncollected for more than a couple of days.

CASE CLOSED

How can I stop IObit taking my money?

Q I subscribe to IObit Pro, but it keeps charging me for upgrades I haven't agreed to. In the past two months it's taken £75, £55, £27 and £157, even though I've only requested one upgrade. I've made many phone calls and sent several emails, but I just can't get this resolved. Is there anything I can do now?

Richard Hall

A Yes, Richard should report to his bank the dates and amounts for all four transactions, and ask for chargebacks for the payments that were unauthorised. The bank should then refund him within five working days. However, IObit might challenge the chargebacks, in which case Richard would need to prove to the bank he'd paid for only one upgrade.

He should also ask the bank to stop any further transactions with IObit. This is vital because IObit told Richard it won't cancel any future transactions itself. If he doesn't tell the bank to do this, it's likely IObit will end up taking more money from his account. We'll also ask the company why it has taken so many unauthorised payments, and why it didn't refund Richard when he asked.

CASE ONGOING

CASE UPDATE

The Range refunds reader despite not having to



We're pleased to say The Range has refunded reader Peter Brice for an electric blanket that never arrived (Issue 721), even though it may not have been legally required to.

Six weeks had passed since purchase when Peter contacted us. The Range had told him he had bought the blanket from a third-party seller on its Marketplace (www.therange.co.uk/marketplace). This meant he had to contact the seller directly for help

(just as you have to contact sellers when buying on Amazon Marketplace).

The difference is that The Range doesn't offer an equivalent of Amazon's 'fulfilled by' service, in which Marketplace sellers pay for Amazon to handle returns and refunds. That means The Range never has legal responsibility for dealing with products bought via its Marketplace.

Peter wasn't sure whether he had indeed



bought the blanket from a Marketplace seller. It's easy to miss this information when shopping at The Range – look for the orange logo at the top left of a product's page (pictured).

That said, The Range should still assist customers who buy from the Marketplace, and to its credit it did give Peter correct information. It then went further than it had to by refunding him.

Contact us so we can investigate your case

✉ **Email:** consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk
Please include your name, phone number and address.

Do Amazon's electrical items have 12-month warranty?

Q I buy many electrical items from Amazon and eBay and want to know if they have the standard 12-month warranty I get when buying from the likes of B&Q and Argos. Also, are warranties different when buying from an Amazon Marketplace seller? And what happens if a seller goes bust – would Amazon or eBay fulfil the warranty?



Paul Davies

A Those are all good questions, and there are several different factors to consider when answering. Most important is that retailers and manufacturers don't have to offer a warranty, but if they do they are legally bound by its terms. This applies whether you buy the item online or on the high street. Retailers on Amazon and eBay don't usually offer a warranty, but the goods they sell often come with a manufacturer's warranty of at least 12 months.

When buying second-hand goods, you

should ask the seller whether the item's warranty will automatically switch to you upon purchase. Also check whether the warranty is valid in the UK. Some online sellers source products from overseas, and the warranty may not apply here either because the item wasn't meant to be sold in the UK or the seller isn't an authorised reseller.

A retailer going bust shouldn't affect a manufacturer's warranty. But if the manufacturer ceases trading the retailer doesn't have to do anything because they weren't responsible for issuing the warranty.

CASE CLOSED

Why does Sky say I can't get more than 20Mbps?

Q Earlier this year, I switched from BT to Sky's 67Mbps broadband. But after I signed up Sky told me I couldn't get this speed due to old copper cables in our area. Openreach recently replaced the copper cables and an engineer said I should now get faster speeds. But Sky maintains it can't deliver this. I'm lucky to get 20Mbps. What should I do?

Mark Hazell

A First, Mark should ask Sky whether it knows that Openreach has upgraded the cables. It may not have updated its system to show he can now get faster speeds.

If it still claims he can't get faster speeds, he should check whether 20Mbps is lower than the guaranteed minimum Sky said he would get.

If that's the case, then he can terminate his contract without paying a fee. Minimum speeds are guaranteed and providers must deliver them (see



Ofcom's site: www.snipca.com/56898).

This is stricter than 'up to' speeds, which providers don't have to hit. Mark should run speed tests at different times and send the results to Sky. The most widely recognised speed test is Ookla (www.speedtest.net), though Sky may ask Mark to try a different speed test. If Sky doesn't help, Mark should consider referring his case to an ombudsman, which in Sky's case is CISAS (www.snipca.com/56899).

CASE ONGOING

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

Findmypast quickly cancelled my subscription

 I've used Findmypast for many years to research my ancestry, but due to poor health and a reduced income I decided to take a break and cancel my annual subscription. However, I forgot to do this in time, despite Findmypast emailing me a reminder.

I only remembered when I noticed the monthly payment had come out of my bank account. I immediately phoned them and



asked to cancel. Now, thanks to your advice in Consumeractive, I knew I had 14 days to cancel the subscription, so I wasn't expecting any pushback. But I was still surprised by how fast and understanding they were. There

was no attempt to change my mind. They wished me well, and issued a

 Has a company impressed you with its customer service? Please let us know: editor@computeractive.co.uk

refund for the month's payment. Such friendly service means I'll almost certainly resubscribe when my fortunes improve.

Kate Mannister

Contact Findmypast

- **Email** support@findmypast.com
- **Web form** www.snipca.com/56892
- **Phone** 020 3326 6300

Grow Your Family Tree



For information on how your ancestors died, follow **Richard Holt's** advice to...

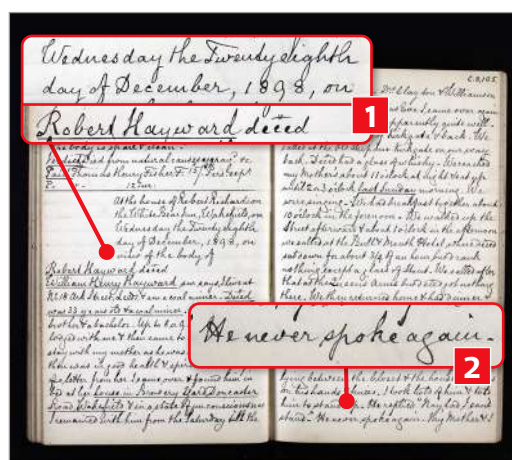
Search Coroners' inquest records

Coroners' inquests can uncover surprising details about your ancestors that you won't find in standard birth, marriage or death records. However, many inquest records have been lost, and some survive only in physical archives. The Internet Archive lists surviving records by county and where they are kept – visit www.snipca.com/56778 then click 'Log in and Borrow' to sign in or create a free account.

The records that have been put online are regional, but they're worth trying. Before starting, read the National Archives' research guide at www.snipca.com/56783.

Browse Ancestry and Findmypast records

Ancestry subscribers can search 200 notebooks in its 'West Yorkshire, England, County Coroner Notebooks, 1852-1909' collection (www.snipca.com/56779). They can include some intriguing witness statements. For example, the inquest for Robert Haywood on 28 December 1898 (1 in our screenshot above right) concluded he died of natural causes. His brother, William Henry Haywood, reported that Robert went outside to the water closet, complained of pains, collapsed on his hands and knees,



William Haywood said his brother Robert collapsed on his hands and knees, and "never spoke again" 2.

and "never spoke again" 2.

Also try Ancestry's 'Post Mortem Examinations and Case Books, 1840-1920' (www.snipca.com/56780), kept by St George's Hospital, London. Findmypast subscribers can search two collections, covering Suffolk 1767-1921 (www.snipca.com/56782) and Wiltshire 1640-1901 (www.snipca.com/56781).

Look through free coroners' indexes

If subscription sites like Ancestry or Findmypast don't cover your area, there

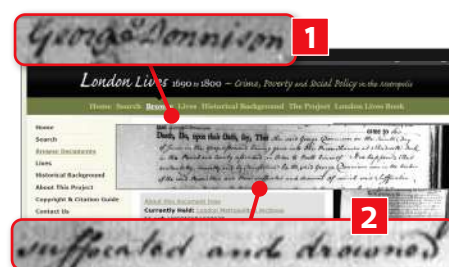
are several free indexes to try. These don't contain the full records but show where they exist, either in physical archives or online.

For example, Hertfordshire Archives has indexed records from 1827 to 1933, searchable in their Hertfordshire Names Online database. Go to www.snipca.com/56786 and search by name, place, cause of death or year.

One interesting case in 1909, in Hemel Hempstead, saw nurse May Rose Bellamy face a manslaughter charge for the death of Edward Almond. She was later acquitted, as you can read in *The British Journal of Nursing* (www.snipca.com/56787).

Similar indexes exist for Bath City Coroner from 1776-1835 (www.snipca.com/56788) – filter results by deselecting every document type on the right except 'Inquests'. On the 'London Lives 1690 to 1800' website (www.snipca.com/56789) fill in the search boxes then click the 'Search in Document Type' dropdown menu and select City of London Coroners, City of Westminster Coroners or Middlesex Coroners.

This is where I came across the record for George Donnison (1 in our screenshot below). On 4 June 1781, he went into the Thames at Shadwell Dock to bathe, but "suffocated and drowned" 2 (www.snipca.com/56784).



George Donnison "suffocated and drowned" in the Thames on 4 June 1781

Your Genealogy Problems Solved

I've just discovered that cousins of my mother worked as Land Girls during World War 2. I have their names, but I don't know where they were located. Is there any way of checking?

Joan Buckingham

Yes, look on Ancestry's 'UK, World War II Women's Land Army Index Cards, 1939-1948' collection (www.snipca.com/56727).

These cards include details such as name, known aliases (including maiden names), address, employment place and county, date of enrolment and WLA membership number. If you don't find your ancestor by searching, try the scrollable A-Z menu at the top right – from Aaron to Zytikiewicz.



Have a genealogy question for Richard? Email letters@computeractive.co.uk with 'Grow Your Family Tree' in the subject line.

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Our diets can lack good sources of magnesium like kale, spinach, black beans, nuts, bananas and whole grains. To help, many people take supplements containing magnesium oxide.

But there's a catch – magnesium oxide isn't always easy for some of us to absorb, and taking lots of it can lead to an upset stomach.'

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'I'm less tired'

Magnesium+ I've really noticed I recover quicker. I've more energy and I'm less tired than I used to be.'

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- **Highly Absorbable Formula:** Magnesium lactate for better absorption, easy on the stomach
- **Added vitamin B6:** Helps reduce tiredness and fatigue and support normal energy metabolism



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EXCELLENT Over 15,000 reviews

***Magnesium contributes to a reduction of tiredness and fatigue, normal energy-yielding metabolism, muscle function and normal psychological function and the maintenance of normal bones. Magnesium+ also includes vitamin B6, which contributes to the regulation of hormonal activity. Food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle.** Introductory offer valid for new UK customers only. Offer expires 31st December 2025. See FutureYouHealth.com/MGF645 for full terms and conditions.

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Your first box is free (just pay £1.50 postage) and you will be enrolled into a flexible subscription costing £12 every 28 days, which you can cancel at any time, without obligation.

Best Free Software

Robert Irvine recommends new programs that won't cost you a thing

SYSTEM-ANALYSIS TOOL

Glow 25.14

www.snipca.com/56896

What you need: Windows 10 or 11



This brilliant free system-analysis tool has been updated yet again, with a host of improvements and useful new features. These provide even more insights into your PC's hardware and software.

Several additions in Glow 25.14 relate to its analysis of your monitor in its Graphics Card section. It now detects the name, manufacturer and serial number of your monitor; the week and year it was built; the screen resolution and **refresh rate**; and even the type of cable connecting the monitor to your PC – such as **HDMI**. The Graphics Card section also now tells you the names of your **DirectX drivers**, in case you need to update them manually.

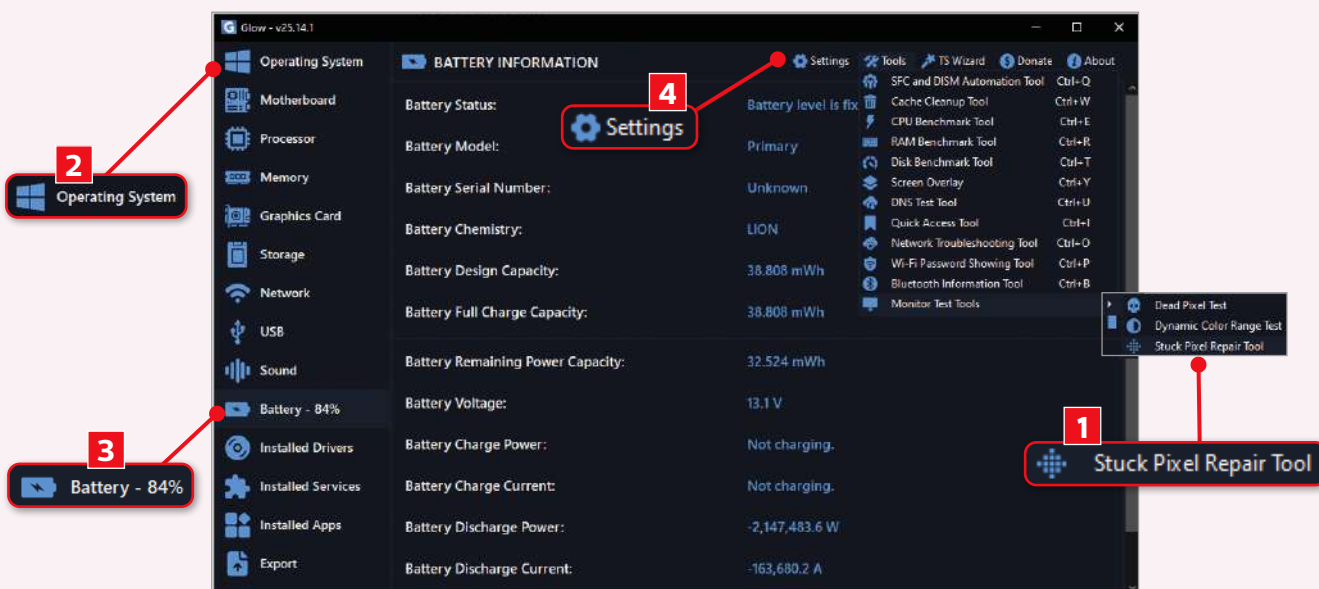
Glow's Battery section has been significantly expanded with extra and more accurate information about your laptop's battery. It now shows the remaining time while the computer is charging or discharging, and the battery's full-charge capacity (in **mWh**), voltage and current. As before, you can click Generate Battery Report to save Glow's in-depth

analysis as an **HTML** file.

Another handy tweak lets you copy information from Glow to your clipboard by double-clicking any blue text. You can then paste it into a document, spreadsheet or email.

However, our favourite new feature in Glow (actually introduced in version 25.13) is the Stuck Pixel Repair Tool. This identifies and fixes stuck pixels on your monitor or laptop screen in the same way as the popular online tool JScreenFix (www.jscreenfix.com). It rapidly cycles through colours over the affected area to 'unstuck' the pixel – though it can't repair completely dead pixels.

If Chrome blocks Glow 25.14 as a 'suspicious download', ignore the warning and click 'Download suspicious file' – it's completely safe to use. Glow also triggers a Microsoft Defender SmartScreen warning (we hope the developer sorts this out soon, as he has pledged to do), but just click 'More info' then 'Run anyway'.



1 To use Glow's new tool for fixing stuck pixels, click the Tools menu and choose Monitor Test Tools then Stuck Pixel Repair Tool – or just press Ctrl+C. Click 'Yes' to run the tool then drag the animated square over the affected screen area.

2 Glow is now able to distinguish your main operating system from another OS you've installed or booted from a USB stick. Click 'Operating System' in the left-hand menu and scroll down to the new Primary Operating System entry.

3 The Battery Section has been updated with lots of useful information about your laptop's battery. This includes the battery's capacity, voltage and current, as well as its charge percentage. Click 'Generate Battery Report' to save full details.

4 Glow has added a System Theme option, which switches its interface from dark to light to match your Windows theme. Click the Settings button and choose Theme then System Theme – or press F3 to switch the option on or off.



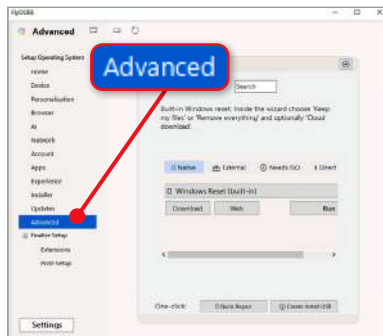
SYSTEM TOOL

FlyOOBE 1.50

www.snipca.com/56373

What you need: Windows 10 or 11

FlyOOBE is being updated so frequently, it's difficult to keep up. The developer is now focusing on its customisation features and has moved the options for upgrading your PC to Windows 11 into a separate tool, UpgradeOOBE. Both are included in the [ZIP](#)



download, so you can choose which one to run – click 'More info' then 'Run anyway' if either triggers a SmartScreen warning. FlyOOBE (the main program) has been redesigned with a smarter interface and a new option for setting your preferred image as your desktop wallpaper. It's now easier to install your favourite software and uninstall unwanted tools, while the new Advanced section (see screenshot) lets you reset and repair Windows without losing files. See page 21 to learn how to avoid fake FlyOOBE downloads.

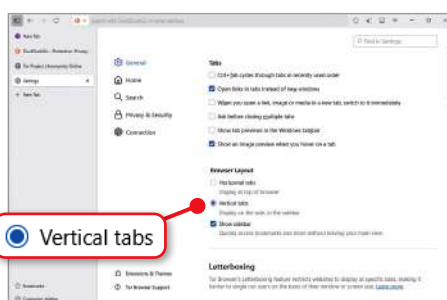
WEB BROWSER

Tor Browser 15.0

www.snipca.com/56897

What you need: Windows 10 or 11, macOS or Linux

Tor Browser is based on Firefox so it often incorporates features from Mozilla's browser. In this new version, these include vertical tabs,



which move your tab bar from the top of the browser to the left-hand side. This makes them easier to access and shows more of each tab's title. To enable the feature, click the three-line menu button and choose Settings then General. Scroll down to Browser Layout and select 'Vertical tabs' (see screenshot). Vertical tabs are just as private as horizontal ones, and their data is deleted as soon as you close the browser. Additionally, as in Firefox, you can now switch between search engines more easily using a dropdown menu in the address bar. Tor says it won't be adding Firefox's new AI features because they could compromise your privacy.

SHOULD I PAY FOR...?

Choose the right version of software

Avast Driver Updater

www.snipca.com/56902

Price: £21.48 a year **Free trial period:** 30 days

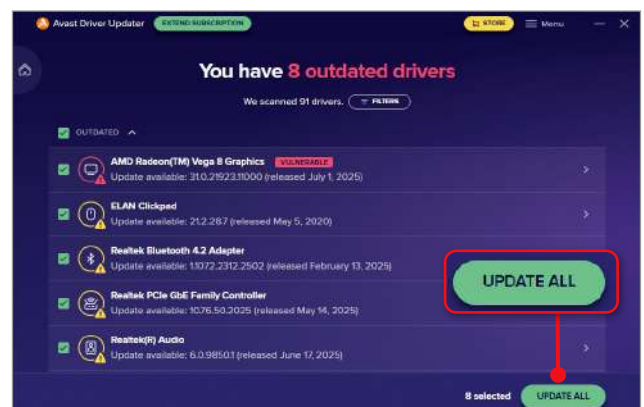
What you need: Windows 10 or 11

Driver updaters are often frustrating to use, either limiting important features – such as actually updating drivers – to their paid-for versions, or bombarding you with ads and 'offers'. Avast Driver Updater is less annoying than most, and though it isn't free it offers a generous, fully functional free trial with no need to enter payment-card details.

Unlike rival tools, it has a simple, friendly interface that quickly scans for outdated drivers, highlights those that urgently need updating as 'vulnerable' and lets you update them all with a single click (see screenshot). It found eight drivers that needed updating on our Windows 10 PC.

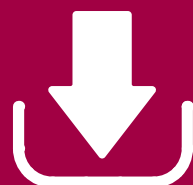
The program clearly informs you which PC component each driver relates to, the date of the most recently available update and the size of the file you need to download. Worryingly, our AMD GPU hadn't installed a driver update released four months earlier, but Driver Updater fixed this.

Although the updater worked smoothly, we're not convinced it's worth paying £1.79 a month for – billed annually at £21.48. It doesn't offer any extra features, not even the creation of [system-restore points](#) before updating drivers, and it shares usage data with Avast – unless you deselect that option. Our favourite driver updater, Snappy Driver Installer Origin (www.snipca.com/56901) isn't as easy to use, but is completely free.



OUR VERDICT: Don't pay for it

Avast Driver Updater is impressively simple, but you shouldn't need to commit to an annual subscription to keep your drivers updated – Windows Update generally does this for you. However, it's worth downloading the free trial to check for driver problems.



What should I download?

We advise you which software and apps to use

Can I recognise faces in thousands of wedding photos?

Q I need to sift through thousands of photos stored in my Pictures folder. They were all taken at weddings over the past few decades. The same people appear in many of them. Is there a way of recognising the same faces that would then help me categorise the photos? I can't afford expensive AI software.

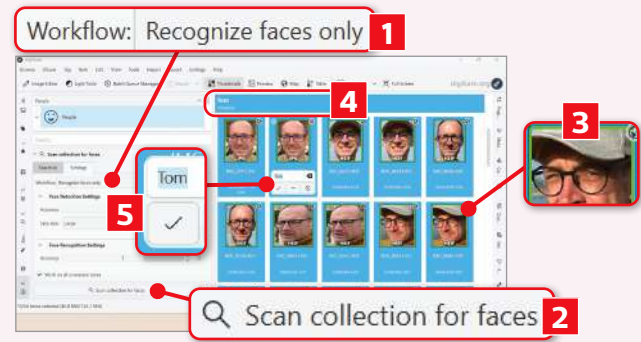
Sam Woodvine

A Thankfully, digiKam now does this for free – download it from www.digikam.org. When you install digiKam make sure you leave the default settings as they are – this ensures digiKam will work with photos stored in your Pictures library.

Next, right-click your Pictures library and click Refresh in the dropdown menu. This will check for changes and show thumbnails of your photos on the right. Click 'People' in the left-hand menu, then switch to the Settings tab and click 'Scan collection for faces'.

Wait for the scan to finish then click a photo and type that person's name, then click 'Create [name]' in the line below. Select another photo. If it's the same person, click the tick below the pre-filled name. If it's not the same person, type their name into the box instead.

Now click the Workflow dropdown menu and select 'Recognize faces only' (1 in our screenshot). Click 'Scan collection for faces' (2) again and digiKam will place newly recognised faces into groups and place a green frame around any new ones (3). Hover over any that have been wrongly included then click the '-' button to reject that suggestion. To add the remainder to the group of confirmed photos of that person, click the section header (4), then hover over one of the photos and click the tick (5).

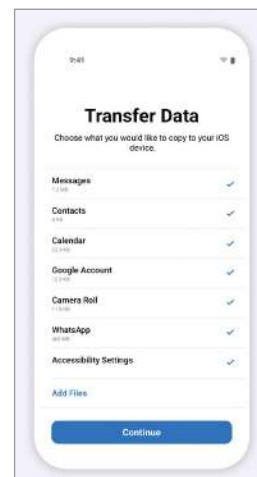


Can I move my Android data to an iPhone?

Q I've inherited a newish iPhone and been 'ordered' by my children to start using it. But all my data is on a collection of Android phones. Is there an app that will help me move this to my iPhone?

Steve Barrett

A Yes, use Apple's own 'Move to iOS' app (www.snipca.com/56717). Make sure both devices are connected to the same Wi-Fi network, enter the code displayed on your new iPhone and select the data you want to transfer, including messages, contacts, photos and WhatsApp chats (see screenshot).



Which software lets me lock my PC with a USB stick for free?

Q I know you can pay for a YubiKey to lock and unlock your computers, but I'm pretty sure the same thing is possible using a USB stick – and that it's free. Which program does this?

Mick Whitehall

A It's called USB Raptor and it is indeed free from www.snipca.com/56721. It's also safe, so if it triggers a SmartScreen security warning when launched, click 'More info' then 'Run anyway'.

Click 'Allow' too, if prompted, so it bypasses Windows Firewall. Enter a password to encrypt your stick, then click 'Create k3y file' (1 in our screenshot). Next, tick the box next to 'Enable USB Raptor' (2) and click Close. Unplug your USB stick and your PC will lock and display a blank green screen. Plug it back in to unlock your PC.



Named & Shamed

Keumars Afifi-Sabet puts the boot into tech villains, jargon-spouting companies and software trying to trick you



SOFTWARE WARNING!

Avoid fake FlyOOBE Windows 11 workarounds

I was able to upgrade my Windows 10 laptop to 11, so I didn't have to use FlyOOBE to beat Microsoft's technical restrictions. But I know many of you are less fortunate, and have followed our instructions to use this clever program (most recently in Issue 720, page 38).

You can tell it's proved popular because scammers are now impersonating it. To get the real FlyOOBE, visit www.snipca.com/56373 then scroll down to the Downloads table and click the top-right link (see screenshot below).

What you mustn't do is download it from <https://flyoobe.net>. The creator of



Click this link to download the real FlyOOBE



the genuine FlyOOBE says this site is an “unofficial mirror and may host tampered or malicious builds”. In other words, it's a rip-off that might cripple your computer with malware.

I can see why people would fall for it. The real program is hosted on GitHub, where developers share software code, and it's not easy for ordinary users to work out which download links to click.

By contrast, the imposter site is attractive, with a bright green DOWNLOAD NOW button. It also has two bumblebee logos that are blatant copycats (see above).

Thankfully, when you search Google for 'FlyOOBE' the real site is the top result, while the bogus one is much further down. But don't even risk it. Grab it from our Snipca link above to be sure there's no sting in the tail.

WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?

WHAT THEY SAY

Nvidia on its AI PC DGX Spark

www.snipca.com/56882

“As a new class of computer, DGX Spark delivers a petaflop of AI performance and 128GB of unified memory in a compact desktop form factor, giving developers the power to run inference on AI models with up to 200 billion parameters and fine-tune models of up to 70 billion parameters locally.”

WHAT THEY MEAN

AI gives us a new class of jargon, with no parameters to how much we use.



KEUMARS' VILLAINS OF THE FORTNIGHT

Michael Ogbeide-John and Bilal Jama

These two charming 18-year-olds planned to take on Halfords by building a bike-selling empire on Facebook Marketplace. The only problem is they were violent thugs who assaulted their potential buyers, stealing hundreds of pounds.

One attack left the victim with seven fractures to his jaw. Surgeons had to insert six metal plates to reconstruct his face. In another they



had arranged to swap e-bikes worth £550, but snatched the victim's bike after threatening to stab them (“I'm taking the bike, I can do it nice or nastily”).

Thankfully, after studying CCTV, police arrested them both in January 2025. In October Ogbeide-John (left) was detained at a young offenders' institution for four years, while Jama received a three-and-a-half year sentence. On yer bike, lads.



MINI PC | £600 from Wired2Fire www.snipca.com/56881

Wired2Fire AMD R8845 Mini PC

Specs appeal

UK company Wired2Fire isn't pulling its punches with its latest AMD-based mini PC. The R8845 has incredible components, packing in more performance, storage and memory than almost every other mini PC at this price.

“The 2TB SSD delivered some of the fastest speeds we've ever seen in a mini PC”

The R8845 has definitely been created with the needs of the home user in mind rather than the gamer or work employee, with no management features or luxuries such as fingerprint readers or **SD card** slots. This makes the design pleasingly uncluttered and at this price it's an absolute steal.

It has one of AMD's latest Ryzen 7 Pro 8845 HS processors, which comes with an impressive eight **cores** and 16 **threads**. And it's certainly quick, clocking in at 5.1 **GHz** under heavier workloads. It even features a fully dedicated **NPU**, which ensures superior performance in AI programs that help you find files or optimise fan settings, for example.

All of this has been paired with 32GB of high-speed Crucial **DDR5 RAM**, and a 2TB **PCIe 4.0 SSD**, which delivered some of the fastest **read** and **write** speeds we've seen in a mini PC. You can even increase that generous storage space,

using the additional **M.2** slot for a second SSD. And it's easy to access via four screws in each of the corners.

In our tests, the R8845 delivered outstanding results, especially when handling more demanding workloads such as editing videos. It was slower when playing games, but since it relies on built-in graphics rather than a separate **GPU**, this isn't surprising.

Other features worth mentioning include the simple chassis, equipped with plenty of inputs and outputs, comprising five ports (two **USB-C**, two **USB 3.2** and one **USB 2.0**), along with one 2.5Gbps **Ethernet** socket, and **HDMI** and **DisplayPorts**. Wireless connectivity is handled by Bluetooth 5.2 and **Wi-Fi 6**. The dimensions of the whole thing are pleasingly compact, measuring just 53x135x127mm (HxWxD).

We have a couple of minor gripes. It lacks rubber feet, meaning it's prone to sliding across your desktop on occasions – though you can always pick up a pack of adhesive pads for as little as £3 (www.snipca.com/56842). And it doesn't take much intense work before the fans begin to kick in, though these aren't particularly loud.



Minor negatives aside, the R8845 is outstanding, and the price tag cements it as our new favourite mini PC, replacing GMKtec's NucBox K11 (though that is still great value at £595, www.snipca.com/54341). Wired2Fire had even reduced it to just £500 for a while, so keep your eyes open for a repeat sale before Christmas.

SPECIFICATIONS

Eight-core AMD Ryzen 7 8845HS processor • 32GB RAM • AMD Radeon 780M • 2TB SSD • Wi-Fi 6 • Bluetooth 5.2 • 1x2.5Gbps Ethernet port • 1x HDMI port • 1x DisplayPort • 2x USB-C ports • 2x USB 3.2 ports • 1x USB 2.0 port • Windows 11 Home • 53x135x127mm (HxWxD) • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/56881

VERDICT Our new favourite mini PC has an outstanding specification and incredible performance levels at a reasonably low price



ALTERNATIVE

GMKtec NucBox K11 £595
With a similar spec, this can connect to an external graphics card for better gaming performance



TABLET | £999 from Apple www.snipca.com/56870

Apple iPad Pro M5

Chip with everything

At first glance, the latest iPad Pro may not seem particularly revolutionary. There's certainly no huge redesign – you still get the same sleek premium aluminium chassis, the same 11in and 13in screen sizes and the same **USB-C** port. The real brilliance comes in what Apple has done to the components within.

“Attach a keyboard and it feels more like a premium laptop than a traditional tablet”

The company has replaced last year's M4 processor with its latest chip – the M5 – and with it, comes huge improvements to general performance. In our tests the new chip was around 15-per-cent faster than its predecessor in tasks such as **4K** video editing.

It's also far more capable at AI tasks, delivering over four times as much raw power as the M4. Apple has achieved this by ensuring each graphics **core** has its own dedicated neural processing unit (**NPU**), which is specifically designed to speed up AI tasks and programs.

That's particularly helpful for jobs like AI upscaling (where you increase an image's resolution without losing clarity), or tidying up your handwriting (when using an Apple Pencil) in the note-taking app Goodnotes. When we put both features to the test, it took a fraction of the time it took the M4. Gaming has certainly benefited from this boost in power, with far smoother visuals and all-around gameplay.

Also impressive is battery life, which lasted around six hours in our heavy-usage testing, and you can charge it from zero to 50 per cent in just 30 minutes with a 60W charger.

Apple has also thrown in its latest N1 wireless networking chip, bringing with



it **Wi-Fi 7** connectivity as well as support for Bluetooth 6 and **5G** mobile connectivity (though 5G support will cost you an additional £200).

The **OLED** Ultra Retina XDR screen is astonishingly crisp and vibrant, offering a sharp 2420x1668-pixel resolution. There are two cameras – a front-facing lens that's perfect for video calls and a fairly decent rear camera as well.

The M5 uses iPadOS 26 which, when paired with a Bluetooth keyboard, makes it feel more like a premium laptop than a traditional tablet.

As is often the case with Apple, the biggest barrier is pricing. The basic 11in, 256GB model starts at £999, with the 13in version priced £1,299. If you want to increase the storage, the price can start to skyrocket rapidly – all the way up to £1,999 for the 2TB 13in edition. Add an Apple Pencil for £79, Magic Keyboard for an additional £299, plus that **SIM** card support we mentioned earlier, and a fully kitted-out 13in model would set you back over £3,000.

Still, if you're looking for a device that's capable of replacing your desktop PC or MacBook, combining beefy performance with the flexibility of a tablet, this iPad Pro could be the answer, although you're probably better off buying the basic model.

SPECIFICATIONS

Nine-core Apple M5 processor • 12GB RAM • 11in 2420x1668-pixel resolution OLED Ultra Retina XDR screen • From 256GB storage • 12-megapixel front camera • 12-megapixel rear camera • **Wi-Fi 7** • **Bluetooth 6** • iPadOS 26 • 249.7x177.5x5.3mm (HxWxD) • 440g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/56870

HOW WE TEST

Computeractive is owned by Future PLC, which employs a team of specialist technical reviewers. You'll often read references to our benchmark testing, which is a method of assessing products using the same criteria. For example, we test the speed of every PC and the battery life of every phone and tablet in exactly the same way. This makes our reviews authoritative, rigorous and accurate.

Future PLC also owns the magazines *PC Pro*, *T3* and *What Hi-Fi*, and the websites Tom's Hardware (www.tomshardware.com), TechRadar (www.techradar.com) and Windows Central (www.windowscentral.com). This means we can test thousands of products before choosing the most relevant for Computeractive.

FAIR AND IMPARTIAL

Our writers follow strict guidelines to ensure the reviews are fair and impartial. The manufacturer has no involvement in our tests.

OUR AWARDS



We award every product that gets five stars our Buy It! stamp of approval. It means we were

extremely impressed by the product, and we think you will be too.



Every product that gets a four-star review is given the Recommended award. We highly recommend these

products, although they just fail to meet the high standard of our Buy It! winners.

PRICES

Our reviews contain a link to the best price we found online at the time of press.

VERDICT With outstanding performance, a high-quality design, improved connectivity and a stunning screen, the iPad Pro is simply superb, as long as you can justify paying this much



ALTERNATIVE Apple iPad 11

£329 The standard iPad remains better value, with 11-hour battery and double the storage (128GB) of its predecessor



LAPTOP | £799 from Argos www.snipca.com/56856

HP OmniBook 5 14in (2025)

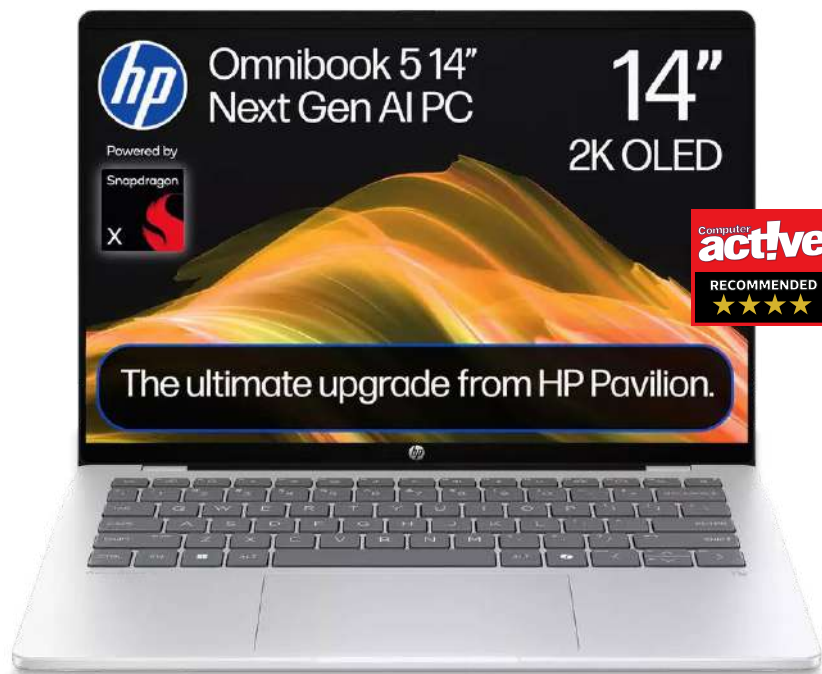
Light work

HP's OmniBook 5 is a great choice for anyone looking to step up from a budget laptop. Inside, you'll find one of Qualcomm's Snapdragon X Plus X1-26-100 processors. The X1-26 is an eight-core ARM-based chip designed for use in cheaper computers.

In our benchmark tests, it scored just 2,414 points in our single-core test and 11,309 in our multi-core test. That matches Microsoft's Surface Laptop 13 (£879 from www.snipca.com/56883), even though the Microsoft device costs £80 more.

“Performance matches the Surface Laptop even though that's £80 more”

If all you need is a laptop that lets you browse the web, reply to emails and do office work, the Omnibook 5 is perfect. Things get trickier if you also plan to play advanced games or use Adobe Photoshop, video-editing software or other more resource-intensive applications. If so, you're better off buying something more powerful like MSI's Prestige A16 AI+ laptop (£1,100 from www.snipca.com/55962) instead.



Despite this modest processor, the OmniBook 5 comes with 16GB of RAM and a 512GB SSD, as well as an absolutely stunning 14in 1920x1200-pixel resolution OLED screen. This produced rich, vibrant colours in our tests, with deep inky blacks, and it's impressively bright too.

Build quality is solid, with a clean, sleek design that's free from gimmicky lighting, harsh edges or unnecessary styling. It also has impressively thin bezels round the screen. The keyboard is pleasant to use, providing a decent tactile response, and has a good layout, although we prefer the power button to be separate – here it's tucked on to the end of the function key row, with only a small LED indicator to differentiate it from the rest. The trackpad is especially slick for a laptop at this price, with buttons that feel satisfying to press.

As for ports, the OmniBook 5 comes with one USB 3.2 port, two USB-C ports and a 3.5mm audio jack (pictured below

left). You also get Wi-Fi 6E and Bluetooth 5.3 connectivity and a 1080p infrared webcam with a built-in privacy shutter. Battery life is fantastic, lasting a staggering 16 hours of continual media streaming – though the MSI Prestige beats it with just over 17.

One thing to be aware is that the left side of the keyboard deck gets a little warm while the laptop is charging. You won't have to charge it often, but when you do, you can't miss how one side of your keyboard is warmer than the other.

Ultimately, whether the Omnibook 5 is right for you depends on whether you prize the convenience of a long battery life over raw performance in demanding tasks. For light work, it's a great choice.

VERDICT Perfect for browsing the web and light office work, with 16-hour battery

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE MSI Prestige A16 AI+ £1,100 32GB of RAM, a 1TB SSD, and a far better processor make this a better, if slightly pricier, pick



SPECIFICATIONS

Eight-core Qualcomm Snapdragon X X1-26-100 processor • 16GB RAM • Qualcomm Adreno Graphics • 14in 1920x1200-pixel OLED screen • 512GB SSD • 1x USB-A 3.2 port • 2x USB-C 3.2 ports • 3.5mm audio jack • Wi-Fi 6E • Bluetooth 5.3 • Windows 11 Home • 12.7x311.9x217.4mm (HxWxD) • 1.29kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/56856

PORTABLE PRINTER | £227 from Amazon www.snipca.com/56910

Canon Maxify BX110

Ink on your feet

If you're looking for a portable inkjet printer that handles A4 pages, you've got your work cut out. There are only three on sale in the UK, and two are getting on a bit. HP's OfficeJet 200 is nine years old and costs £290 (www.snipca.com/56908). Epson's WorkForce WF-110W is cheaper (£174 from www.snipca.com/56911), but came out in 2019. That just leaves Canon's Maxify BX110, released earlier this year.

“Its rechargeable battery is good for 330 pages”

The BX110 measures just 66x322x185mm (HxWxD) and is smaller than a sheet of A4 paper. Canon has somehow managed to condense all that printing hardware into such a tiny footprint without sacrificing output quality, though this might explain why it costs more than many traditional home-office printers.

Canon has also squeezed in a handy little **OLED** screen on the top, along with several menu buttons and options. Its rechargeable battery is good for 330 pages and is recharged via a **USB-C** port (which can also transfer data from laptops if necessary). Plus, there's support for **Wi-Fi Direct** and **Access Point mode**.

Given its modest dimensions its limitations hardly come as a surprise. There's no paper tray. Once your prints are done, they'll pop into a neat pile in front of the machine, while the in-tray can handle a maximum of just 50 sheets at a time. There's no support for automatic duplex (double-sided) printing and scanning is not included.

It prints quickly though, producing black-and-white documents at around 8.5 pages per minute (ppm), and more

SPECIFICATIONS

4800x1200dpi A4 colour inkjet • 50-sheet input tray • 1.4in OLED screen • 802.11n Wi-Fi • Wi-Fi Direct • USB-C port • Removable 330-page battery • 66x322x185mm (HxWxD) • 2kg • Two-year warranty
www.snipca.com/56910



demanding colour output at 2.2ppm. It even handles photo-quality images, delivering six postcard-size snaps in just over 10 minutes. And there's no difference in quality whether the printer is plugged in or not.

Text quality was bold and crisp, and graphics were equally impressive with strong colours that made illustrations and charts really pop. There was a little oversaturation in places, which led to slightly pinkish skin tones in some of our photos, but you'd only notice when looking closely.

Put up against Epson's WF-110W, the BX110 beats it on almost every criteria. The battery lasts longer; you can charge it directly via a USB port (including in your car if it has one); and the paper tray is twice the size. It prints more quickly than the WF-110W, and if you throw ink costs into the equation, it's also cheaper to run (9p per page for colour; 4.2p for mono) – though it costs £50 more upfront.

Is this better than a full-size home-office inkjet? No, but then it's not designed to be. However, the BX110 has enough features and performs well enough to make it our favourite portable printer.

VERDICT Faster than any other portable inkjet printer and cheaper to run, with a longer battery too

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE Epson WorkForce WF-110W
£173 Smaller and more affordable upfront, the only downside is the cost of the ink



CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPECS

Headphone jacks



What are they?

Headphone jacks are electrical connectors used to transmit analogue audio signals from a device to headphones, speakers and other audio equipment. Commonly found on laptops, phones and Hi-Fi systems, they come in a variety of sizes with 3.5mm and 6.35mm being the most common.

How do they work?

There are four parts to any analogue audio setup: A DAC (digital-to-analogue converter); a headphone jack (the socket on your phone, laptop, computer or other device); a compatible plug with cable; and a device that produces the audio. When headphones are connected via a cable to a device –

such as FiiO's QX13 Phone Headphone Amp/DAC (pictured right – see our review, page 26) – and audio is played through them,

the DAC will convert the digital signal into an electrical analogue waveform, which is then sent through the cable to the headphones. With the help of audio drivers that signal is then converted into sound waves that your ears can detect.



What are their specs?

The primary specification is size. Although 3.5mm is the most common standard, 6.35mm is often found in professional-level speakers and headphones – although there's no notable difference in audio quality.

Jacks are rated as either 3-pole (TRS) or 4-pole (TRRS) compatible. 4-pole adds an additional contact for a mic, which lets headsets handle both audio and voice input through the same jack.

Can I change it later?

Most modern devices come with a 3.5mm 4-pole jack as standard. If you have 6.35mm headphones or speakers, you can buy adapters to connect to 3.5mm. If your device lacks a jack, you can also buy a USB-C-to-3.5mm adapter.

HEADPHONE AMP | £202 from Amazon www.snipca.com/56867

FiiO QX13 Phone Headphone Amp/DAC

Fixing Bluetooth decay

While Bluetooth technology has come a long way, it still can't deliver audio at the same quality as a good pair of wired headphones. So even though many devices have lost the 3.5mm audio jack, we've sacrificed audio quality in the process. Chinese company FiiO are out to rectify this with its latest QX13 headphone amp.

It's a portable, **USB-C** digital-to-analogue converter (DAC) and headphone amplifier that you plug into any device that supports it and thereby improve audio quality. As long as your phone, games console, PC or laptop has at least one USB-C port, and you have a set of high-end analogue headphones, you're good to go.

Available in either a carbon-fibre or aluminium finish, the QX13 is tiny at just 64x31x13mm (HxWxD), and weighs only 39.2g (the carbon model is just 33.7g). Its full-colour touchscreen is protected by Corning **Gorilla Glass** too. FiiO even

provides a magnetic leather case that lets you stick it to the back of your phone.

The audio setup, however, is where the QX13 shines. The device includes the high-end ESS Sabre ES9027SPRO DAC, which is capable of handling huge audio file resolutions all the way up to **32bit/768kHz**, giving you far better quality than you'll hear over Bluetooth.

That's backed up by a robust amplification system, designed by Texas Instruments and engineered to minimise **cross-talk** and any electrical noise or interference that can ruin otherwise high-calibre audio. There's even a 'desktop mode' that requires additional power but delivers even more volume.

Plug in a set of 3.5mm or 4.4mm headphones and you'll immediately experience crystal-clear audio and an intensely detailed sound with clear instrument separation and strong, controlled bass notes.

Vocals are dynamic and punchy, letting you hear every note and nuance. There's a little too much emphasis on higher frequencies, which might make music feel a tad harsh for those who prefer a warmer sound, but all audio sounded incredible in our tests.

As for downsides, the screen feels

too cramped. There's just too much information, and navigating through the menus requires impressive eyesight and dextrous fingers.

Also, at £200, it sits at the more expensive end of the portable DAC market. However, the high-spec components and top-quality results justify the price somewhat, and it's all held together by an impressive build quality.

VERDICT It's portable, well built and produces outstanding audio quality, but it does so at quite a cost

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE iFi GO Link Max **£79**

At less than half the price it provides incredibly well-balanced audio, although it doesn't support 4.4mm jacks

SPECIFICATIONS

ES9027SPRO DAC • 8-350 Ohms compatibility • Up to 768kHz/32bit audio-file resolution • 2in 170x320-pixel resolution LCD display • 4.4mm audio jack • 3.5mm audio jack • 1x USB-C port in (Audio/Power) • 1x USB-C in (Desktop Power) • 64.2x30.7x13mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/56867



WHAT SHOULD I BUY?

We solve your buying dilemmas

What's the best Chromebook under £250?

Q I've recently updated my Windows 10 laptop to 11, but I now also want a Chromebook for more basic tasks, like browsing the web and using Gmail. My budget is around £250. Any ideas?

Kenny Shaw

A Yes, try Acer's Spin 312, which we gave a Recommended award to in Issue 715 (page 23, pictured). Its full price is £249, but at the time of writing Amazon is selling it

for £230 (www.snipca.com/56939). It's the smallest in Acer's range of 2-in-1 Chromebooks, with a screen that measures 12.2in across the diagonal.

It's rather bulky, so it isn't ideal for carrying around. But thanks to a solid hinge on the lid, it can be easily propped upside down and used exclusively in touchscreen mode. With 4GB of **RAM** it's never going to rival Windows laptops, but that's enough to make it swiftly handle online tasks – though some **4K** videos stuttered in our tests.



Battery life is very impressive, lasting just over 11 hours. Few Chromebooks can compete with this, including even the £749 Samsung Galaxy Chromebook Plus 15.6in (www.snipca.com/56940).

Do you need advice on what you should buy? Email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

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BEFORE



AFTER



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*QUOTE CA1125

Is your conservatory TOO HOT in summer and TOO COLD in winter?

WARMER IN WINTER

"There is no doubt the conservatory is much warmer, and not darker either!"

David Birch, *Chichester*

TRANSFORMED CONSERVATORY

"We're so proud of our transformed conservatory that we have recommended Green Space to many of our friends and relatives."

Mr and Mrs Davies *Somerset*

COOLER IN SUMMER

"You could have fried an egg on the table in there in the summer, I now look upon the conservatory as a new room. It is quiet, restful and cosy."

Carol Doyle, *Surrey*

REDUCES ENERGY BILLS

"I've already turned the underfloor heating down. Lovely job guys, thank you!"

Anne Bird, *Bristol*

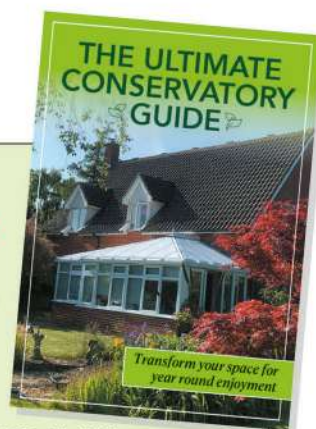
FREE GUIDE

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PORTABLE SSD | £110 from Amazon www.snipca.com/56880

Lexar ES5 Magnetic Portable SSD

Stick with it

The ES5 is one of the most versatile yet affordable portable SSDs we've ever tested. For £110, you get 1TB worth of nippy storage with a USB-C 3.2 Gen 2x2 connection that Lexar claims delivers very fast data-transfer speeds approaching 2GB/s. In our tests, it actually peaked a little higher than that, with the final results reaching 2,045MB/s when **reading** data and 1,996 MB/s when **writing**.

Measuring just 84x53x10mm (HxWxD), this dinky little drive is remarkably rugged in its rubberised case, and weighs just 57g. Its big selling point, however, is that it sticks magnetically to

SPECIFICATIONS

Available in 1TB and 2TB capacities • USB-C 3.2 Gen2x2 • Speeds up to 2000MB/s • Encryption software included • 84x53x10mm (HxWxD) • 57g • Five-year warranty www.snipca.com/56880

the back of your phone or anything else with a metallic case (iPhone owners will be glad to hear it works with **MagSafe** too).

The device is compatible with a vast array of operating systems, including Windows 7 and above, macOS 10.6+, iOS and Android 4.4 or later. If you regularly transfer video files or photos from one device to another across different systems, the ES5 will make the process easy.

There's no hardware encryption – instead Lexar uses software, which you have to set up on a computer before you can use it. You'll then need to type a password to access anything on the drive. Don't let the software encryption put you off – our decrypting software couldn't break into it when we tried.

The device is impressively robust, too, with an **IP64** rating for water resistance,



and it will even easily survive a three-meter drop.

VERDICT Fast, versatile and excellent value, with the added bonus that it's magnetic

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE LaCie Rugged SSD4 £204 Bulkier than its Lexar rival but makes up for it with almost twice the transfer speeds



POWER BANK | £40 From Amazon www.snipca.com/56885

Anker Nano Power Bank 10K

Bring charges

At just £40, the Anker Nano Power Bank 10K is great value for a 10,000mAh portable battery. It offers some excellent features you won't find on most other banks, including a semi-transparent screen on the side of the device, and a 70cm retractable USB-C charging cable. It has a USB-A and USB-C port so you can connect your own cables.

The screen is particularly useful, showing how much charge is left. It also provides additional statistics, such as overall battery health and whether the unit is reducing its charging speeds to keep the temperature down, which

SPECIFICATIONS

45W total power output • 10,000 mAh capacity • 1x USB Type-A port • 1x USB-C port • 1x USB-C cable (integrated) • 81x50x36mm (HxWxD) • 229g • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/56885

can occur if you charge the bank while simultaneously charging other devices from it. It's compact, too, measuring just 81x50x36mm (HxWxD), and weighs a mere 229g. It also has a looped cord, meaning you can easily fix it to a belt or a backpack.

Performance was impressive in our tests. It has a peak load of 45W, and we found it could charge a Samsung Galaxy S24 FE phone from zero to 100 per cent in around 80 minutes.

That 45W charge makes it perfect for keeping phones and tablets topped up, but if you need to charge something larger such as a laptop, you'll need a power bank with a little more oomph – such as Anker's 87W model, called the 20K (www.snipca.com/56900). However, it doesn't have a screen.



VERDICT With a built-in screen, retractable cable and plenty of capacity, the Anker Nano is great for topping up your phones and tablets

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE Anker 20,000 mAh 87W Power Bank £40 Costs the same and has a higher power output for charging laptops, but it's bulkier and you lose the screen



SMART TV | £500 from Amazon www.snipca.com/56891

TCL P7K 65in QLED 4K

Set apart



At £500, this 65in **4K QLED** TV from TCL is a real bargain. The Chinese company is renowned for its high-quality budget smart TVs, but this takes it to a whole new level, providing incredible 4K image quality and – thanks to its Google TV interface – plenty of streaming services, including Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, Netflix, Spotify and YouTube. Of course, a low price often means corners have been cut, but let's first accentuate the positives.

First off, picture quality is outstanding. TCL is using a 60Hz 4K **HVA LCD** panel with **full-array** backlighting, amplified by QLED colour technology. Stream any 4K content, and the images look superb, while colours are well balanced, yet punchy. Skin tones look natural, and contrast is good, despite a fairly modest maximum brightness of 350**cd/m²**. It can also generate significant **depth of field** in those scenes that require it.

TCL also includes an AI **upscaling** chip, which helps improve picture quality on older, lower-resolution content. There's support for all **HDR** standards, including **HLG**, **HDR10+** and **Dolby Vision**.

There's plenty of connectivity options here, including an **Ethernet** port, **dual-band Wi-Fi 5**, Bluetooth 5.2, an optical audio port, plus two aerial sockets, one **USB 2.0** and a **USB 3.0**. It's stylishly designed, with slim bezels and a sturdy plastic build.

On the downside the screen's darker tones and blacks in particular can't match the OLED panels found in many LG sets, but they tend to be significantly more expensive. It does mean night-time scenes

on the P7K can look a bit blocky or blurred with detail missing.

Audio, too, is a little hit and miss, with only a twin speaker setup and no built-in **subwoofer** to boost volume or bass. You'll need to connect a soundbar to get the most out of it. It comes with three **HDMI 2.1** inputs, one of which has **eARC** support. Plug your soundbar directly into that, and it'll turn on when you switch on the TV.

The P7K, then, is not without its flaws. Its audio is below-par, and it struggles with night-time scenes. That said, £500 is a great price for an incredibly crisp 4K 65in TV, with a huge selection of streaming options. And, if you don't mind spending a little extra on a soundbar, it could be just what you need.

SPECIFICATIONS

43in, 50in, 55in, 65in or 75in versions • 4K QLED screen • 2x 10W audio speakers • 3x HDMI ports • 1x USB 2.0 port • 1x USB 3.0 port • Wi-Fi 5 • Bluetooth 5.2 • 84x144x33cm (HxWxD – 65in screen) • 23.1kg (65in screen including stand) • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/56891

VERDICT Modestly priced, the P7K delivers surprisingly high-quality images and a broad choice of apps

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE

Sharp GM6245K **£330** Significantly smaller, but this 4K QLED TV delivers similar quality at a much lower price



DO I REALLY NEED...

An iPhone case with a keyboard?

What is it?

The MetaKey from Chinese company Akko (www.snipca.com/56906) is a rugged phone case designed for the iPhone 16 and 17 Pro Max (pictured), with a built-in tactile keyboard, powered by **USB-C**.



What does it do?

The MetaKey protects your iPhone and allows you to type on a backlit physical keyboard, maximising screen space. The USB-C port also acts as a passthrough, so you can still charge your phone with the case attached, and it also has a magnetic back providing compatibility with **MagSafe** products.

What's the catch?

It's in high demand, often on back order, and costs £51 (£63 with postage). It also substantially increases the overall size of the already large iPhone Pro Max; the MetaKey's dimensions measure 205x85x13mm (HxWxD).

So can I do without it?

Yes. The iPhone 17 Pro Max already has a large screen and a well-designed touchscreen keyboard.

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Best Android tablet you can buy for under £200?



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Our pick of products that have won the **Buy It** award

LAPTOP

MSI Prestige A16 AI+
£1,100 from www.snipca.com/55962
Tested Issue 718



A powerful Copilot+ laptop with 32GB of RAM and a 1TB SSD to guarantee fast performance. Screen is excellent too, while battery lasts an impressive 17 hours.

ALTERNATIVE PC Specialist 16 Fusion British-made laptop with superb screen and built for advanced AI tasks. £956 from www.snipca.com/55094

DESKTOP PC

Palicomp AMD Cobra
£400 from www.snipca.com/43515
Tested Issue 643



This fast PC is a mouth-watering bargain, with 16GB of RAM, a 2TB SSD and a six-core processor – though it lacks USB-C ports and built-in Wi-Fi.

ALTERNATIVE Wired2Fire Ultima WS Home Office Workstation Blisteringly fast PC, powered by an overclocked eight-core processor and 1TB SSD. £610 from www.snipca.com/41500

APPLE iPad

Apple iPad 11
£329 from www.snipca.com/54887
Tested Issue 711



With a faster processor and increased storage (from 64GB to 128GB), the 2025 edition of the iPad is simply stunning. Battery life is over 11 hours, which is better than any other iPad, including more expensive models.

ALTERNATIVE iPad mini 7 The 2024 version of the mini improves the colour accuracy on the 8.3in screen and has a more powerful processor. £499 from www.snipca.com/52573

ANDROID TABLET

OnePlus Pad 3
£529 from www.snipca.com/55302
Tested Issue 714



With an incredibly fast processor and stunning 13.2in screen, this is the best ever Android tablet, and rivals the iPad Air. At launch both the 12GB RAM/256GB and 16GB/512GB versions were £529, so grab the latter as soon as possible.

ALTERNATIVE Samsung Galaxy Tab S9 Has a much brighter screen than its predecessor, making it ideal for watching TV. Also has a faster processor, speeding up tasks. £584 (128GB) from www.snipca.com/50039

APPLE iPhone

Apple iPhone 16
£699 from www.snipca.com/53981
Tested Issue 695



This is the best new iPhone for years, boosted by a processor that's as fast as much more expensive models. The screen is excellent, while the new Camera Control button gives lots of ways to take photos.

ALTERNATIVE iPhone 14 Now heavily discounted, this remains a speedy phone with great features and an impressive camera. £495 (128GB) from www.snipca.com/53982

ANDROID PHONE

Samsung Galaxy A56
£499 from www.snipca.com/54585
Tested Issue 709



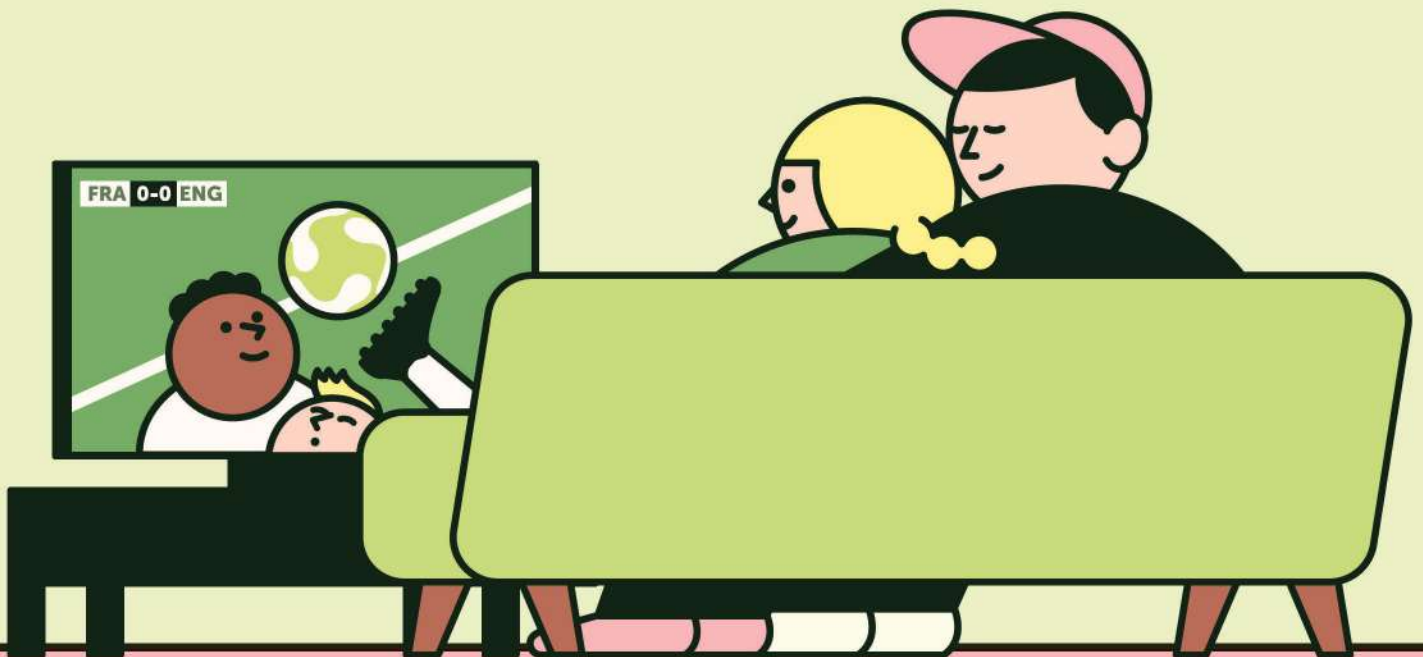
The successor to Samsung's mid-range A55, this has a stunning screen and lasted over 29 hours in our tests. It's faster than Google's Pixel 7a in all tasks, and has AI-powered photo tools.

ALTERNATIVE Google Pixel 7a Cheaper version of Google's flagship phone, it uses AI to improve photos and lasts 10 hours. Has fast processor and 8GB RAM. £460 from www.snipca.com/56073

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Our pick of products that have won the **Buy It** award

MINI PC

Wired2Fire AMD R8845
£600 from www.snipca.com/56881
Tested Issue 723



Outstandingly fast machine, with 32GB DDR5 RAM and a 2TB SSD. You can easily add a second SSD by unscrewing the case. Has all the ports you need and measures just 53x135x127mm (HxWxD).

ALTERNATIVE GMKtec NucBox K11

Speedy, powerful and easily upgradeable, with an OCuLink connection for graphics cards. £595 from www.snipca.com/54341

EBOOK READER

Amazon Kindle Paperwhite
£160 from www.snipca.com/52730
Tested Issue 698



The sixth version of the Paperwhite has a larger screen (7in), faster page turns and longer battery life (12 weeks – up from 10). Its glare-free finish means you can easily read it in bright sunlight, and its 300ppi resolution makes text a joy to read.

ALTERNATIVE Kobo Libra Kobo's first colour e-reader, with over 4,000 tones to make illustrations and photos leap out. £210 from www.snipca.com/50192

SECURITY SOFTWARE

Norton 360 Deluxe 2025
£9.99 from www.snipca.com/55927
Tested Issue 629



Norton has always performed strongly in our antivirus tests, regularly making the top three. Owned by US firm Gen Digital, it's available at a discount on our Software Store. Use the link above for a three-device, 15-month licence at a special discount price. Other versions are available.

ALTERNATIVE Bitdefender Total Security Another top performer that we're offering at a discount. £24.99 from www.snipca.com/41141

WEBCAM

Obsbot Meet SE
£67 from www.snipca.com/54725
Tested Issue 710



The Meet SE from Chinese firm Obsbot beats the picture quality of our previous favourite, Logitech's C925e. Colours are vibrant and accurate, with terrific detail even in poor lighting thanks to a relatively wide aperture.

ALTERNATIVE Creative Live Cam Sync 4K

Affordable 4K webcam with high-quality video that can also capture voice from a distance. £45 from www.snipca.com/56585

PC MONITOR

Philips 27E1N1600AE
£192 from www.snipca.com/54190
Tested Issue 692



An affordable 27in monitor with a sharp resolution, impressive image quality and a sturdy build. It has an HDMI port, a USB-C port and two USB 3.0. The hefty base means you can raise and tilt the monitor easily using just one hand.

ALTERNATIVE Asus ROG Strix XG27ACS

Another excellent 27in monitor with 1440p resolution and a fast refresh rate aimed at gamers. £229 from www.snipca.com/49898

SOLID-STATE DRIVE

Corsair MP600 Pro LPX 1TB
£84 from www.snipca.com/52658
Tested Issue 630



In our tests, this M.2 SSD hit speeds of 7,364MB/s and 6,870MB/s when reading and writing data – astonishingly fast scores. It's compatible with the new PCIe 4.0 standard, which is twice as fast as PCIe 3.0. The 1TB model costs £84; 2TB costs £170.

ALTERNATIVE Crucial MX500 500GB

As fast as an SSD can get in the traditional 2.5in SATA format, this is a great-value upgrade. £80 from www.snipca.com/56926

COMPETITION

Win a pair of...

SIVGA Peng Closed Back Dynamic Headphones



SIVGA's Peng headphones have earcups made from high-density African zebrawood that's been polished, stained and air-dried to reveal each piece's unique grain. The natural resonance of the wood enriches mid-range warmth and clarity. No two sets look alike.

Under the hood, Peng's closed-back acoustic chamber and custom 45mm dynamic driver deliver rich, immersive sound. The rugged finish guards against scratches and corrosion for

long-term durability.

Oversized earpads have an angled profile to match your ear's contours, ensuring an airtight seal and preventing sound leakage. Top vents enhance airflow to keep you cool. Clear L/R markings make left/right orientation a breeze.

To enter this competition, answer the question at www.snipca.com/56728 and submit your details by midnight Tuesday 2 December. Good luck!

You can buy the SIVGA Peng for £499 from www.snipca.com/56729. For more SIVGA products, including the Anser and Luan headphones and M200 earphones, visit www.snipca.com/56730.

PRINTER

HP OfficeJet Pro 9135e

£181 from www.snipca.com/53101

Tested Issue 700



A versatile cartridge printer-scanner for the home office that makes printing jobs quicker and easier than most of its inkjet rivals. Colour prints cost a reasonable 6p per page, while mono costs 2p. Printed text is superb and photos are pretty good too.

ALTERNATIVE Epson EcoTank ET-1810

Not the fastest printer, but comes with enough ink for 4,500 mono and 7,500 colour pages. £150 from www.snipca.com/52191

SMART TV

Bush 43UT24SB

£180 from www.snipca.com/53637

Tested Issue 703



It's rare to find a 43in TV this cheap, especially with a superbly bright screen. Sound isn't bad either, and it offers most of the streaming services, including Freely. Its TiVo operating system is very easy to use.

ALTERNATIVE Sharp GM6245K

Has a fantastic 43in screen with superb contrast, and 4K content looks especially detailed. Comes with TiVo for paid-for streaming and Freely for free live channels and catch-up. £230 from www.snipca.com/55940

ROUTER

TP-Link Archer BE550

£180 from www.snipca.com/55981

Tested Issue 718



This tri-band router is the first Wi-Fi 7 model to be our top choice. It had enough bandwidth across our test house to stream six 4K movies simultaneously, and has five 2.5Gbps Ethernet ports.

ALTERNATIVE Asus RT-AXE7800

Our previous favourite is also tri-band, but only on Wi-Fi 6E. That still delivers incredibly fast speeds that stretched deep into our test house. £180 from www.snipca.com/52957

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HOW TO...

Access cloud storage through File Explorer

by Nik Rawlinson

What you need: ExpanDrive **Time required:** 30 minutes

Online-storage services are great. They make it easy to drop the files you need on multiple computers into a single location, then have access to them everywhere that you happen to log in. However, most services offer only a limited amount of space unless you're willing to pay for an upgrade.

The obvious workaround is to sign up for a number of services, but this isn't ideal. Saving your documents and files in several online locations means you may quickly lose track of where items are.

Running multiple file-sync programs – one for each service – also has its downsides. While that may save you several trips to your browser, it's a waste of resources, as they take up drive space and keep your processor and memory busy. Those precious resources won't then be available for more pressing tasks, which could make streaming services stutter and editing photos sluggish.

Over the years, several third-party providers have come up with a solution: a single **client** that syncs multiple cloud

services. ExpanDrive is one of these, and in July it was made available for free after it was bought by US cloud-storage company Files.com.

Inside ExpanDrive, your services are stacked and synced alongside each other, as well as being added to File Explorer in Windows. Using it, you can get rid of all those synchronisation programs, reclaim resources on your PC, and, because all of the cloud services will live in the same window, you should find your files more quickly.

1

Install ExpanDrive

Launch your browser and visit www.expandrive.com. Click the red 'Download for Windows' button and, when it's finished downloading, launch the 'ExpanDrive Setup' program from your Downloads folder. Windows will



You'll need to set up an account with ExpanDrive, as well as your cloud services

ask if you want to allow 'this app from an unknown publisher' to make changes to your device. Click Yes. ExpanDrive will then pop up its home screen.

Unless you already have an account, click Register, then enter your full name and email address (1 in our screenshot left), and click Activate Free Registration (2). On our device, registration only took a second, after which it asked us to select the first of the online-storage services we wanted to work with.

2

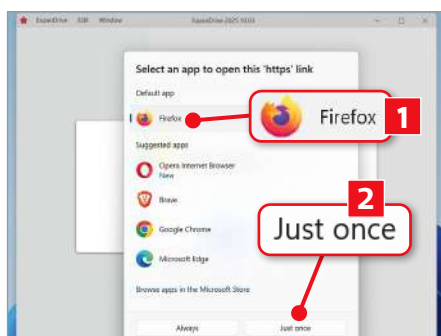
Add your first online-storage service

Click the icon for the first service you want to add. The process for



Click the icon for the service you want to add to ExpanDrive

authorising each connection can differ slightly between providers, so we'll guide you through two popular options: Google Drive (1 in our screenshot above) and Dropbox (2).



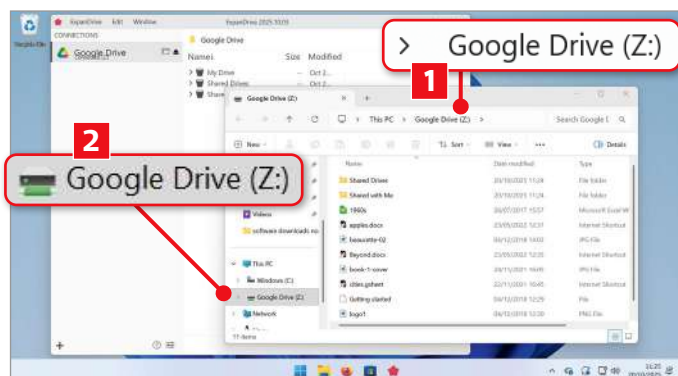
ExpanDrive suggests a browser to use to sign into your cloud services

If you have a Google Drive account, start with that option by clicking its icon (not Google Cloud Storage). This redirects you to your browser where you can fill in Google's familiar login form. However, on our system there was an intermediate step: it actually launched a box asking us which 'app' we wanted to use to visit Google's login screen. This was hidden behind the ExpanDrive window, so check your taskbar for any flashing icons, and if you see one, click it to show this box.

Here, it has correctly suggested our default browser (Firefox, **1** in our screenshot above), so we can click 'Just once' **2** and it will switch. If yours doesn't automatically select the browser you want to use, click it in the list, then click 'Just once'.

Next, click the username for the Google Account you want to use, followed by Continue. On the following screen, you'll need to explicitly grant ExpanDrive access to your files (otherwise it won't be able to manage them) so tick the box beside 'See, edit, create and delete all of your Google Drive files', then click Continue again.

Now switch back to ExpanDrive and you'll see that it's asking what you want to call this connection and which drive letter it should be given in File Explorer.



ExpanDrive shows the contents of your cloud storage in its own window as well as opening it in a File Explorer

How I synchronise my files

I tend to only use one public cloud service, which is pCloud (www.pcloud.com), so I don't need to synchronise between several third-party providers. However, I do run my own cloud service on my home network to synchronise my various computers, and I can see that having that sit alongside cloud services supported by a program like ExpanDrive would be very useful indeed.

Nik Rawlinson



How do you synchronise your files?
Please let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

You can leave the default selection as it is, which is to nickname the service Google Drive, to connect it in File Explorer as drive Z, and to automatically 'mount' (connect to) it as though it was a regular drive. Click Save.

ExpanDrive will now use the credentials you provided to connect to Google Drive. If it's successful, it will display the connection in its own sidebar, with the folders on your Google Drive space in the window's main pane. However, it will simultaneously open a new File Explorer window showing the contents of your Google Drive.

You'll notice two things here. First, Google Drive is shown in the address bar at the top of the File Explorer window (**1** in our screenshot below left), showing that it's working as though it's directly connected. Second, if you expand the This PC section in the sidebar by clicking the chevron (>) to the left of its name, Google Drive will appear alongside your Windows drive, and have the drive letter Z **2**, as you selected when setting it up.

You could open it in a tab, just as you would a regular attached drive, even if you're not running the Google Drive app to synchronise files between your

local computer and your cloud storage in the traditional way.

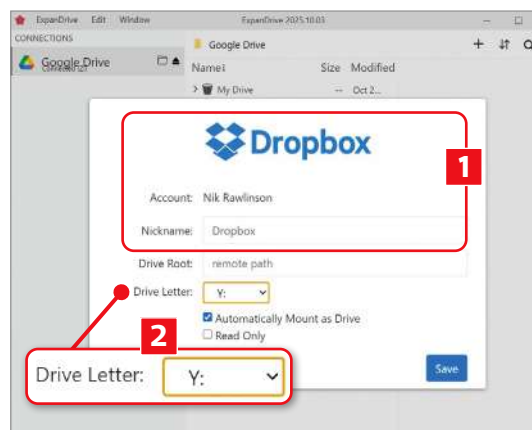
3 Add more cloud-storage services

One of the main benefits of using a third-party cloud-storage program like ExpanDrive only becomes apparent when you've set up several cloud services simultaneously. So, click the ExpanDrive menu in the ExpanDrive window, then click New Connection, or skip the menu altogether by pressing Ctrl+N.

Again, click the icon for the service you want to add. Here, we're adding our Dropbox account (**1** in our screenshot below). To follow along, click the Dropbox icon, then log in using your regular credentials. When we did this, it sent a code to our email address that we needed to type into the login window to authorise the process.

When it's connected to your Dropbox account, it will return you to the box that you saw at the end of the process for adding your Google Drive space, asking you to specify a nickname, drive letter, and whether you want to automatically mount it as a drive.

When we reached this stage, it again



Make sure each cloud login has a different drive letter assigned to it

suggested connecting Dropbox to our computer as a virtual drive Z. However, as you'll remember from the previous step, that's the letter we assigned to Google Drive. So, we've changed this to Y in the Drive Letter menu **2**.

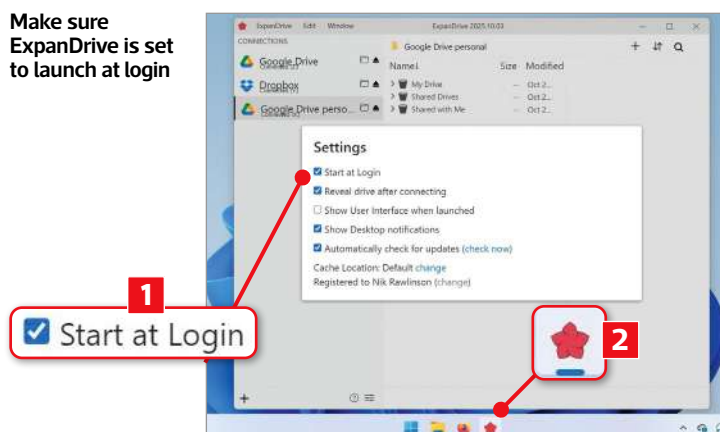
Make sure that whenever you add a new service to ExpanDrive you give it a unique drive letter (and by unique, we mean not only that it should be different to the letter assigned to any other cloud-storage service, but also that it shouldn't clash with the letter assigned to any internal or external physical drive attached to your computer).

Click Save to complete the process. Once again, ExpanDrive will display the new connection in its sidebar, and the contents of your Dropbox space in the window's main pane, as well as opening a view of that connection in File Explorer.

Repeat this process as many times as required until you have set up all of your online-storage services. Rather neatly, you can even set up several different accounts at each provider if you want, even if that wouldn't usually be possible when working with the service's own synchronisation tool. We set up two accounts with Google Drive, which allowed us to switch between them at will in File Explorer, and copy data between them easily.

Now that you've connected all the cloud services you want to use, you can start managing the files stored on each one in a more convenient way. For example, if you want to back up the contents of, say, your Dropbox space to an external drive attached to your computer, you can do just that. Open Dropbox in the File Explorer sidebar, then select the files you want to copy. Now navigate to the folder in which you want to store your duplicates, and press Ctrl+V to paste them.

Make sure ExpanDrive is set to launch at login



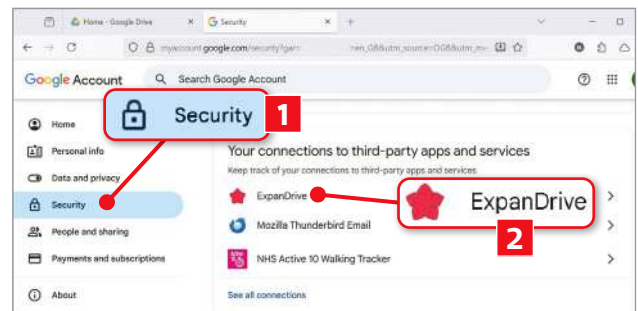
Check your software's authorisations

When you give software access to your cloud services, the program will keep track of the service so it knows whether it has been authorised. It's good practice to review these authorisations over time and

remove any you no longer need. The process for doing this varies between services, but in every instance you'll first need to log in to your account.

As an example, to remove ExpanDrive's authorisation to access your Google Drive account after you've deleted the account within ExpanDrive itself, switch to your browser and log in at <https://drive.google.com>.

Now click your icon at the top right of the page and click 'Manage your Google



Account' on the menu that appears. Click 'Security' in the sidebar (**1** in our screenshot), then scroll down to 'Your connections to third-party apps and services'. Click ExpanDrive **2** – or any other service whose authorisation you want to revoke – then scroll to the bottom of the following screen and click 'Delete all connections that you have with ExpanDrive'. Naturally, this line will instead say the name of the service you're working with, if not ExpanDrive.

4 Make ExpanDrive start when you boot your PC

You need ExpanDrive to start whenever you boot your PC if it's going to connect your cloud drives to your computer. It should be set to do this by default, but if for any reason you find your cloud services aren't appearing in File Explorer, first check that nothing has changed.

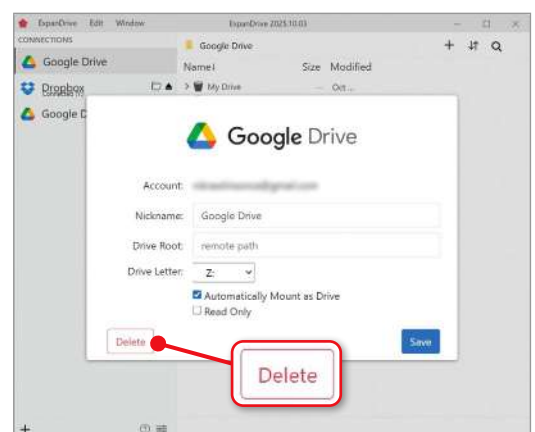
Click the up-pointing arrow at the end of the taskbar to reveal your hidden programs and look for the red flower icon that represents ExpanDrive. If it's there, click it. If not, open ExpanDrive from the Start menu. Now click the three lines at the bottom of the sidebar to open its Settings and make sure the box

beside 'Start at Login' is ticked (**1** in our screenshot below left). When it's running, its icon will now appear in your taskbar **2**.

To temporarily disconnect a cloud service, hover over its name in the sidebar and click the eject button that appears to the right. It will immediately disappear from File Explorer but will reconnect the next time you restart your computer.

If you want to remove it entirely, eject it in the manner described, then click the cog icon that appears beside its name. Click the Delete button at the bottom of the window (see screenshot below), then click it a second time to confirm it should be removed from ExpanDrive. You can always add it again at a later date should you change your mind.

Click 'Delete' to remove a cloud service



Access remote computers using AnyViewer

What you need: AnyViewer

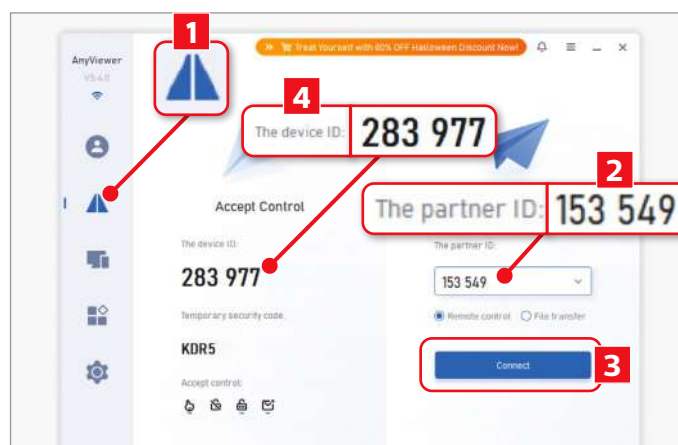
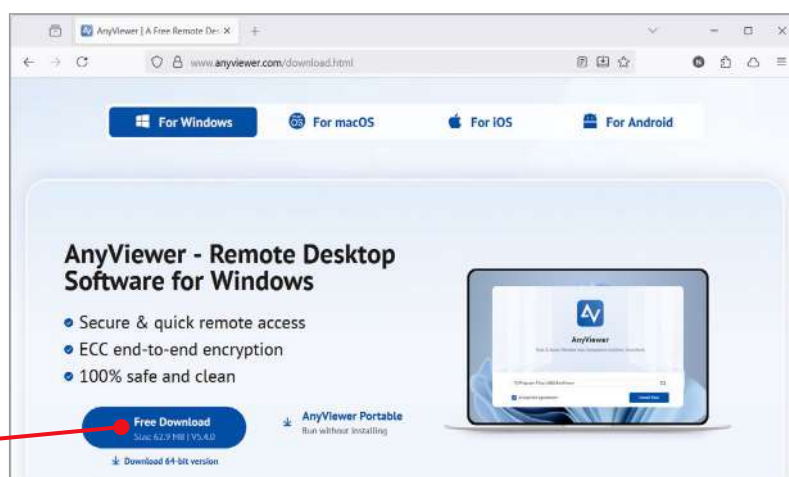
Time required: 30 minutes

AnyViewer lets you access remote computers across your home network and the wider internet. This means you can manage your own PCs from a single keyboard and mouse, or access friends and families' machines when they need your help. Recent updates simplify the process

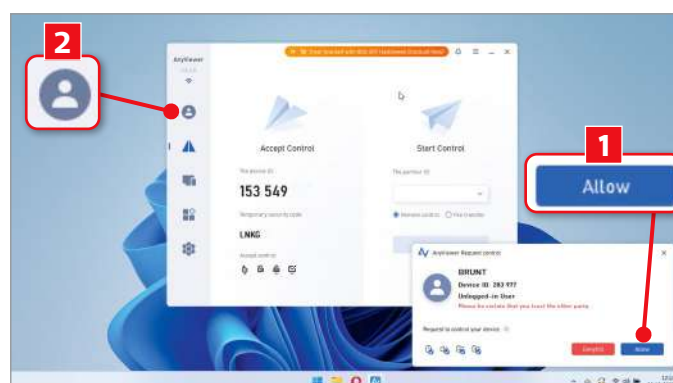
of setting up an account on your machines and add features like capturing screenshots and recording your screen – as we'll explain. There are paid-for plans available, but here we'll be using the free version. It's limited to three devices but should suit most users.



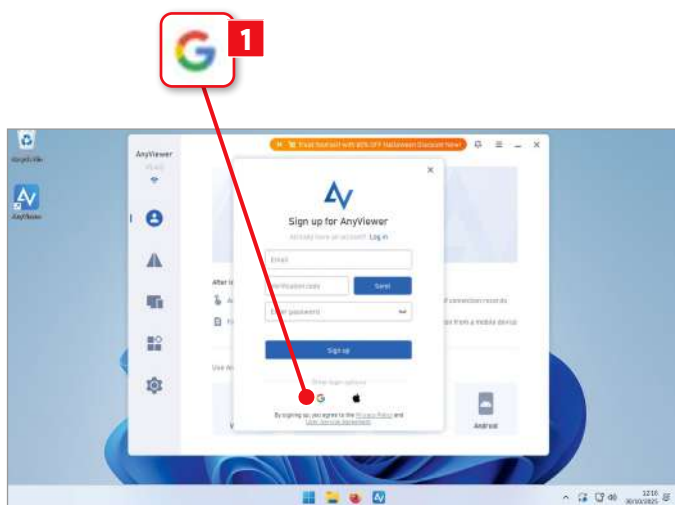
STEP 1 On the computer from which you want to access other machines, open a browser window at www.anyviewer.com and click Download, followed by the Free Download button **1**. When the file has finished downloading, launch the 'AnyViewerSetup.exe' file from your Downloads folder and click through the installation instructions. When Windows prompts you to let it make changes to your device, click Yes. Repeat the process on any computer you want to control remotely.



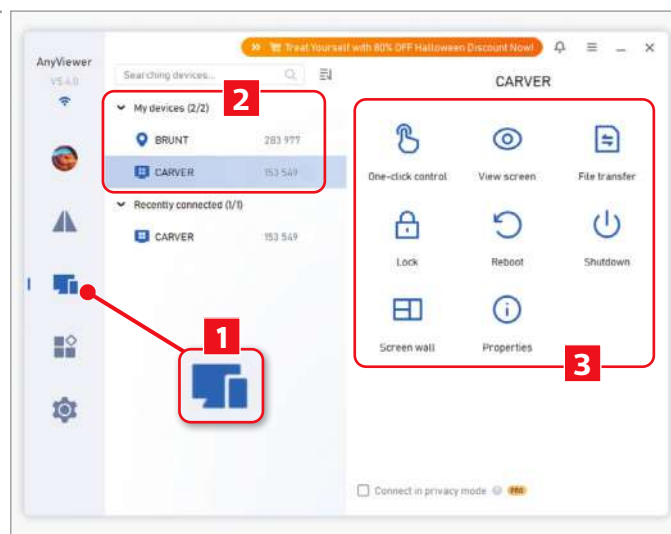
STEP 2 To access a remote computer, click the Connect icon **1** in the left-hand sidebar, then type the device ID of the remote machine in the 'partner ID' box **2**, and click Connect **3**. On the left you'll see the device ID of the computer we're using **4**. You now need this number from the remote machine – if this is away from your home network the owner should be able to share it off their screen. On the pop-up, select whether you want to send a request to the remote machine, or input the security code, which is also displayed on the remote PC's AnyViewer window, then click OK.



STEP 3 If you send a request, the remote machine will display a pop-up asking to grant you access. Your contact needs to click Allow **1**. You will then see the remote machine's desktop on your machine. But what if the other person is away from their machine? If you create an AnyViewer account (which the latest release lets you do using your Google account), you can log in even when the remote PC is unattended. Return to your AnyViewer dashboard and click the 'login' icon at the top of the sidebar **2**.

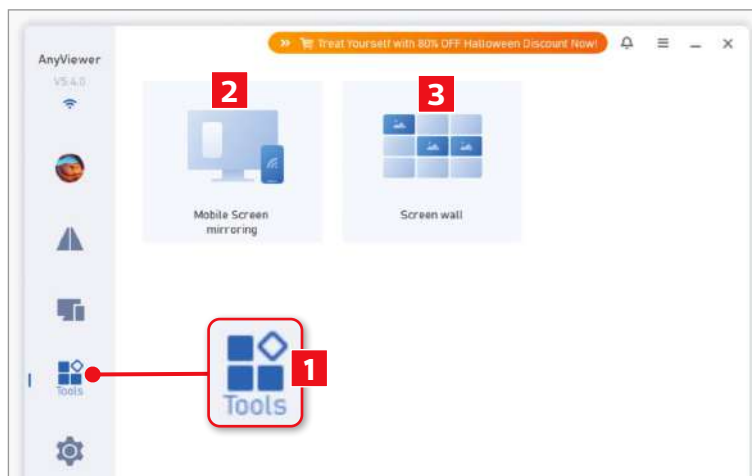
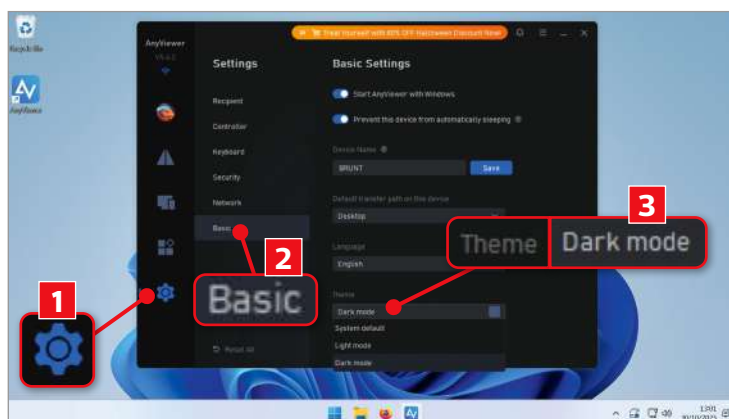


STEP 4 Click 'Sign up', then either fill in the form, or click the Google icon at the bottom of the panel **1** – the Google account login screen will then appear. Click the entry for the account you want to use, then click Continue. When you see the Successful Login screen, click Start Application to return to AnyViewer. Back in AnyViewer, on the 'Successful login via Google' panel, click 'Log in directly'. Repeat this process on the remote machine.



STEP 5 On either computer, click the Device icon **1** and you'll see your logged-in computers **2**. The computer you're using will be listed at the top, so double-click the second in the list and you'll be immediately logged in without needing to enter the code you had to supply in Step 2. You can also use the remote controls **3** on your local screen to reboot, shut down, or lock the remote machine, or to transfer files between devices.

STEP 6 When controlling a computer remotely, AnyViewer now lets you take a screenshot of its screen and record what you're doing in real time. The results are saved in the Screenshots folder within the AnyViewer folder inside the Documents folder on your machine, not the remote device. There's also a 'Dark mode' option, which you can activate by clicking Settings **1** in the sidebar, followed by Basic **2** on the second sidebar that appears. Select 'Dark mode' **3** in the Theme menu on the main pane.



STEP 7 Finally, the new Tools section **1** gives you access to 'Mobile Screen mirroring' **2** and the 'Screen wall' **3**. Mobile screen mirroring lets you **mirror** the screen on your Android device, iPad or iPhone to your computer to help you work more efficiently. The 'Screen wall' feature lets you keep an eye on multiple logged-in devices simultaneously in a single AnyViewer window.

Readers' Tips

TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

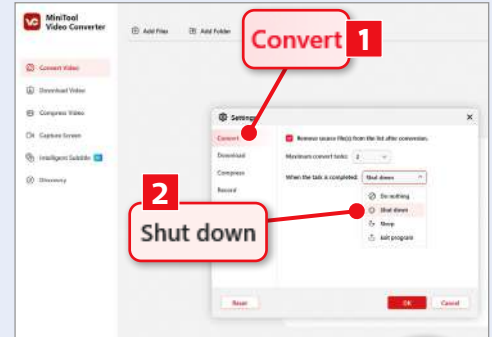
Make MiniTool shut your PC after converting videos

I've been using MiniTool Video Converter (www.snipca.com/56496) for several years, so was delighted to read that version 4.5 has been released (Issue 721, page 18). It has one of the cleanest interfaces of any video program I know.

You mentioned the Settings menu. One of the options I use is for my laptop to automatically switch off once MiniTool has finished converting my video. Click the top-right menu icon (three horizontal lines), then Settings. Now choose 'Convert' (1) in our

screenshot) then click the 'When the task is completed' dropdown menu. I normally pick 'Shut down' (2), but you can also choose 'Do nothing' (which is the default), Sleep and 'Exit program'. Click OK to confirm.

By forcing my laptop to automatically turn off I can safely set MiniTool to convert large videos before going to bed. I wasn't sure at first whether it would work, so started converting small videos first. I gradually built up to larger files and



it's never let me down.

John Stanley



John wins a copy of our 2024 Back Issue CD

Buy it from us at www.snipca.com/53433

Wi-Fi

Boost speed using aluminium tray

✓ I've managed to greatly increase my Wi-Fi signal with a used (and washed!) aluminium food tray (pictured below right). It takes a bit of trial and error to get the best angle, but it's not too difficult. A bigger tray doesn't seem to make any difference, but smaller ones are less effective.

My router is approximately 10 metres away from the Wi-Fi antenna with two stud walls in between – one with shelving.

Connecting using an Ethernet cable is



aesthetically unacceptable to my wife. I currently pay for 500Mbps broadband. Using the tray my signal strength increased from 69 to 77 per cent, but more striking was the increase in speed. Without the tray my receive and transmit speeds were 351 and 585Mbps respectively. With the tray they each shot up to a potential maximum of 867Mbps.

I'm not sure if the tray acts as a reflector to enhance the router signal, or cuts out interference from my neighbours' Wi-Fi routers – or perhaps a bit of both. Browsing the web is much quicker, as are downloads. Not bad for a recycled bit of 'metal'!

David Plews

PASSWORDS

Use forked version of KeePass

✓ I was surprised that Robert Irvine was so unenthusiastic about KeePass in Issue 720's Cover Feature on password managers. If you choose the **forked** version KeePassXC (<https://keepassxc.org>), you can run it across multiple platforms, including Linux, macOS and Windows. It also has apps that work well on Android and iOS.

I keep my password database on Dropbox so it's always up to date on my laptop, phone and iPad. It autofills on all these devices, as well as being a convenient place to store other information like PINs. You can even put a portable version on a USB stick if you want to use someone else's computer.

I'm sure Bitwarden is great, but I've

Why I stopped using...

Pocket Casts

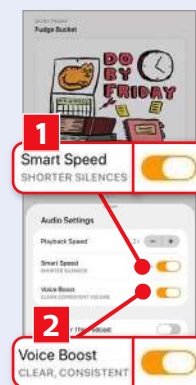
✓ I hadn't realised that Pocket Casts' online podcast player (www.snipca.com/56492) was now free (Issue 721, page 51), so I'll probably check it out. But I stopped using its app when I moved from an Android phone to an iPhone.

And what I use instead...

Pocket Casts does work on iPhones, but I now use **Overcast** (<https://overcast.fm>) because it was purpose-built to

work on iOS – and you can tell the difference.

The design of Pocket Casts (on both Android and iOS) is rather confusing. But Overcast's options on iOS feel better fitted to the operating system, making it easier to select options like Smart Speed (1) in our screenshot, which removes silences from conversations so you can listen to an episode faster, and Voice Boost (2), to make quiet voices louder without

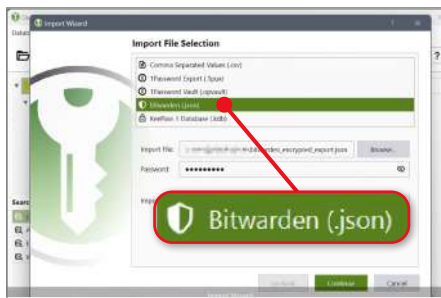


you having to tap the volume button.

Both these are available in the free version, and I've never found them in Apple's official podcast app. You have to pay to remove adverts, but that's par for the course these days.

Jason Pollard

✉ Tell us why you stopped using a website, app or program: letters@computeractive.co.uk



never felt the need to try anything else since I started using KeePassXC several years ago. You can also import Bitwarden passwords into KeePass XC (see screenshot above).

David Singer

TV Improve display settings on Fire TV Stick

I decided to explore some of the features in my Fire TV Stick's settings, so selected 'Display & Sounds' then 'Display Settings'. I noticed my Panasonic 4K TV could automatically switch to 4K Ultra HD (see screenshot below). Out of curiosity, I checked my old Thomson TV, and to my surprise the Fire Stick let me select 1080p HD. Even though the TV can only display standard definition, the picture looks noticeably cleaner because the Stick is **upscaling** it before it reaches the **SCART** adapter. I'm amazed that a modern streaming device can still work so well with a TV that's almost 30 years old.

John Ryan



SOFTWARE Use CutePDF to print from Quicken

In Issue 720's Problems Solved (page 66) you suggested to Jim Winnett that in order to print from Quicken in Windows 11 he could set up Windows XP in a **virtual computer**. However, I also use Quicken (albeit the 2013 version) and use a much simpler alternative method. I have installed a program called CutePDF (www.cutepdf.com) from Acro Software that sets itself up as a printer **driver**. If I want to print from Quicken, all I do is select the

Reader recommends...

Netac US9 1TB portable SSD
£83 from Amazon www.snipca.com/52113

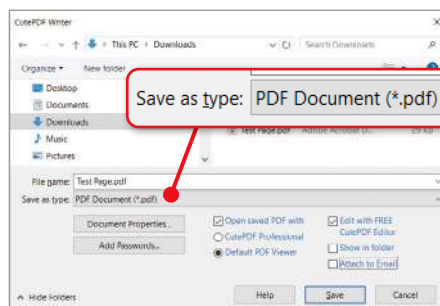
In my part-time job as secretary of a local museum I often have to transfer large video files between PCs. I've tried various methods in the past, including sending them using Dropbox and WeTransfer, but the Netac US9 SSD beats them all.

It doesn't have any software built in, so is ready to use from the second you plug it in. I found this refreshing compared with many over-fussy sticks I've used before, and it's worked on all the Macs and Windows PCs I've tried. It's so fast that you can edit videos from the stick itself while it's inserted, without having to download the videos to your computer.

The design is a little peculiar, and isn't in the style of traditional memory sticks. In fact, when I opened the package I thought at first Amazon had sent me the wrong device. But what the covers do at either end is protect the two connectors. One is **USB-C**, the other **USB 3.0**, making it very versatile. You can buy a 256GB model for £37, but why do that when for barely more than double that price you can grab the 1TB stick?

Susan Howard

Want to recommend hardware or software to fellow readers?
Email letters@computeractive.co.uk



I didn't see these, but if they appear when you install it, you should deselect them.

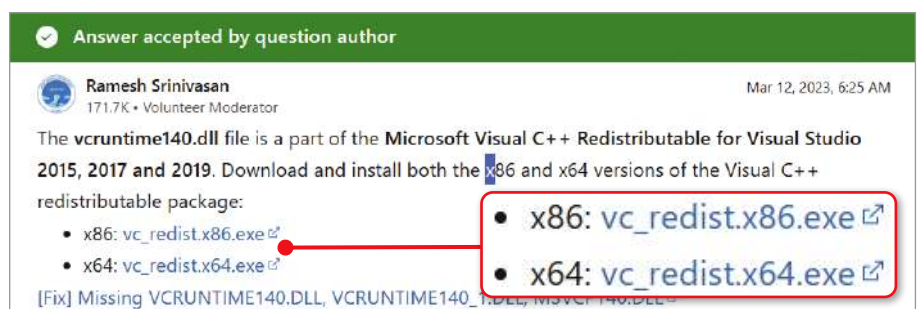
Robert Beattie

SOFTWARE Download Microsoft's C++ files to use Ashampoo PDF editor

For various reasons, including cost, I needed to buy a new PDF editor, and eventually chose Ashampoo PDF Pro 4 (£32.50 from www.snipca.com/56839). However, when I opened the software for the first time I received an error message about a 'not found' file – 'MSVCP140.dll'.

I discovered this is quite a widespread problem. I found the fix on Microsoft's help forums, which explained that you need to download Microsoft Visual C++ Redistributable for Visual Studio 2015, 2017 and 2019. To do this, click the 'x86: vc_redist.x86.exe' and 'x64: vc_redist.x64.exe' links at www.snipca.com/56840 (see screenshot below). After I installed these files Ashampoo opened perfectly.

Chris Adam



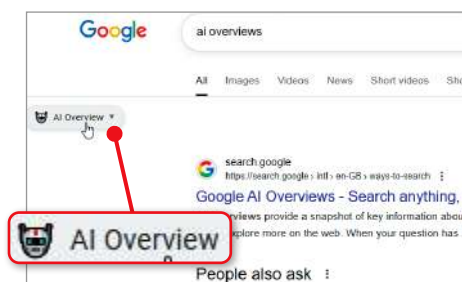
CHROMIUM

Hide or collapse Google's AI Overviews

 We've previously recommended 'Bye Bye, Google AI' (www.snipca.com/55947) as an effective way to remove AI Overviews from Google search results. The new extension 'Hide or Collapse AI Overviews' (www.snipca.com/56792) offers an alternative and more flexible method.

It automatically removes AI Overviews from the top of Google results, so you can focus on links to web pages, rather than (often inaccurate) AI summaries. But if you sometimes find AI Overviews useful, you can 'collapse' them instead.

Click the extension's toolbar icon and switch on 'Collapse instead of hide'. This relegates the AI Overview to a button on the left-hand side of your results (see screenshot below). Click this to display its information.

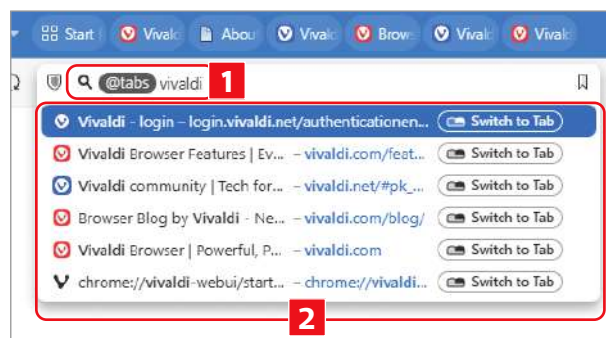


VIVALDI

Search the browser from the address bar

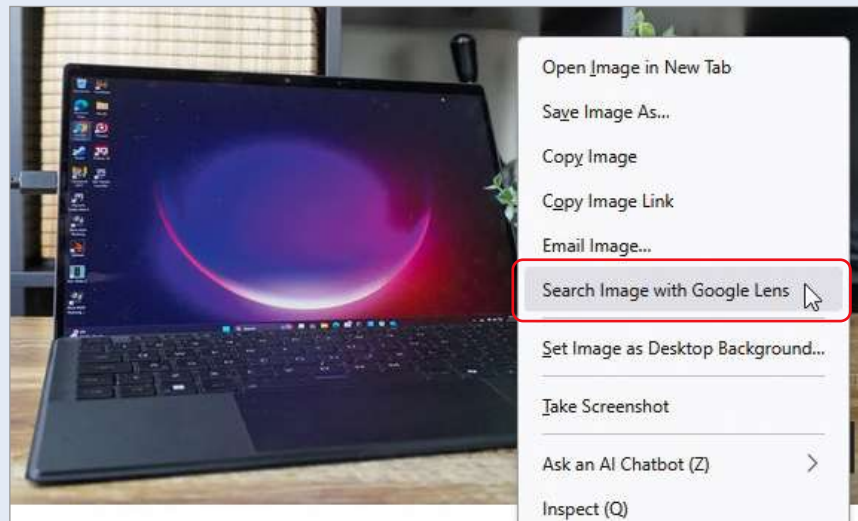
 One of the most useful new features in Vivaldi 7.6, released in September, lets you search different areas of the browser directly from the address bar. These include your open tabs, your browsing history and any pages you've bookmarked.

To search across your tabs, for example, type **@tabs** in the address bar and press Space, then enter a keyword (1 in our screenshot below). Matching results will



FIREFOX

Search images using Google Lens



 Firefox 144, released in mid-October, lets you look up information about images using Google Lens. This feature has been available in Chrome since last year, but it's surprising to see it added to a non-Chromium browser.

To use the new option, right-click an image on a web page and choose 'Search Image with Google Lens' (see screenshot). This will open a new tab displaying visual matches for the picture, which have similar subjects,

and exact matches, so you can see where else it's been used online.

Click 'About this image' to discover the context of the image, such as when and where it was first published, and whether it's AI-generated. Click 'AI Mode' to analyse its content and learn more about its subject. If the picture is of a product, click Products to find where to buy that item online.

The 'Search Image with Google Lens' option will only appear when Google is set as Firefox's default search engine.

be displayed in a dropdown list below the bar 2 – select one to switch to that tab.

Similarly, type **@history** or **@bookmarks** to search your History and Bookmarks.

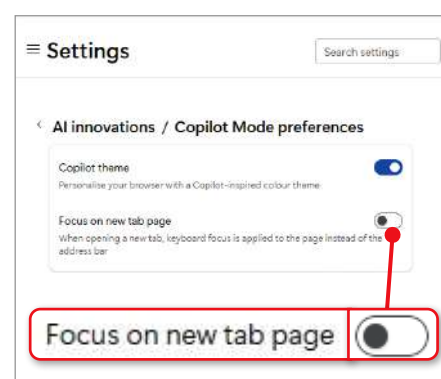
EDGE

Move the text cursor to the address bar

 When you open a new tab in any browser, a blinking text cursor – or 'caret' – appears in the address bar, so

you can type a URL or search query. In Edge's new Copilot Mode (see Issue 717, page 42), the text cursor instead moves to the Copilot message box in the centre of the new-tab page.

The idea is for you to instantly start chatting to the AI assistant, and ask it to open web pages and



perform searches for you. However, if you prefer the traditional address-bar approach, you can revert to that.

Click Edge's three-dot menu button and choose Settings then 'AI innovations'. Select 'Copilot Mode preferences' and switch off the option 'Focus on new tab page' (see screenshot above). The caret will now appear in the address bar rather than the Copilot box.

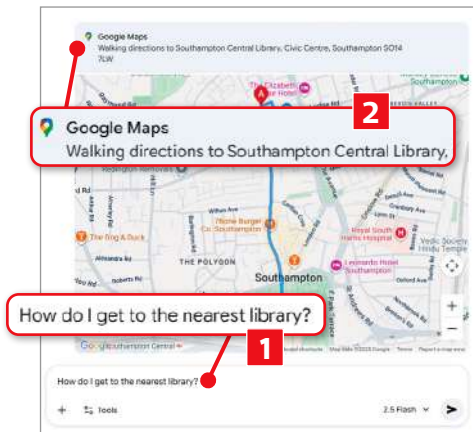
GEMINI

Access Google Maps and YouTube directly

Gemini has improved its integration with Google Maps and YouTube to make it easier to get information from those services. Previously, you needed to type the commands **@GoogleMaps** and **@YouTube** to access the respective tools.

Now you can phrase your queries in natural language, such as 'How do I get to the nearest library?' (1 in our screenshot below) or 'Show me a video review of the latest iPhone'. With maps, Gemini will provide a zoomable map from Google Maps, accompanied by driving and walking directions (2).

With video requests, it will source relevant videos from YouTube and let you play them within your chat.

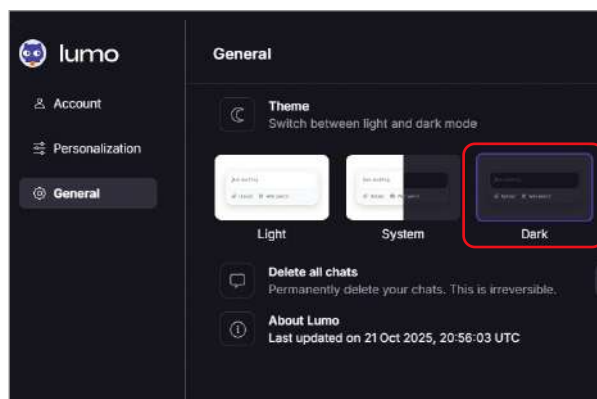


PROTON LUMO

Activate the new dark mode

Proton Lumo has introduced a **dark mode** to make interacting with the chatbot easier on your eyes – especially at night. To activate the new mode on the Lumo website (www.snipca.com/56804), click the arrow icon at the bottom of the left-hand sidebar and choose Settings.

Select 'General' and click Dark (see screenshot below) to apply the dark



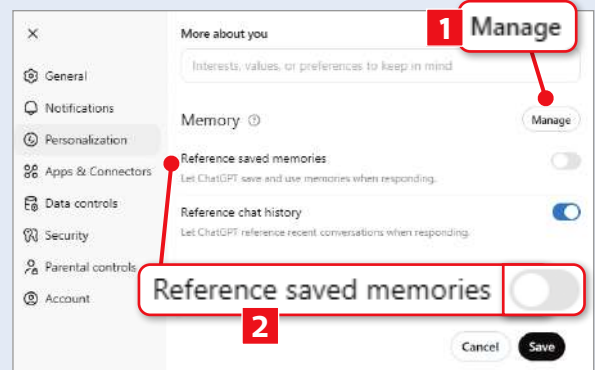
CHATGPT

Manage your saved memories

ChatGPT now automatically manages your saved 'memories' – the details it remembers about you so it can tailor your future chats accordingly. Previously, you needed to ask the **chatbot** to remember specific information, but it will now identify and save useful details without prompting.

Additionally, ChatGPT will prioritise the most relevant memories over less important ones. To decide which memories stay 'top of mind', it considers how recent a detail is and how often you talk about a topic.

If that sounds worrying in terms of privacy, you can check which memories ChatGPT has saved and



delete any you don't want it to remember. Click your profile name in the bottom-left corner of the ChatGPT website and choose Personalization. Scroll down to Memory and click Manage (1 in our screenshot) to review and delete saved memories.

To disable the feature altogether, switch off 'Reference saved memories' (2). Click 'Save' to confirm.

theme to the Lumo interface. In the mobile app, tap the three-line menu button and follow the same steps.

Proton has also added personalisation options to Lumo's Settings. These let you provide information about yourself, and instructions for how you want Lumo to behave, to tailor its responses accordingly (but still privately).

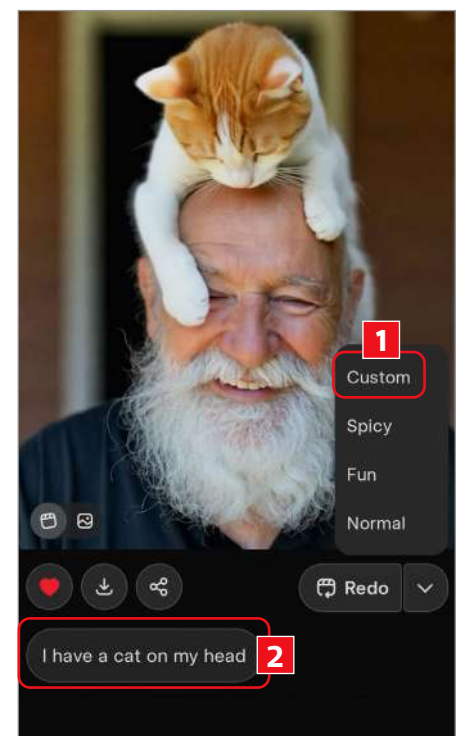
GROK

Add speech to your videos

Grok has updated its brilliant video-generation tool, Imagine (see Issue 718, page 43), to add speech to clips you create. This works in its app for Android (www.snipca.com/56602) and iOS (www.snipca.com/56603) for all Grok users.

Select 'Imagine' and either enter a text prompt to generate an image, then tap Make Video, or upload one of your own pictures. Grok will add its own audio to the video, but you can change the words.

Press the down arrow below the video and choose Custom (on



Android, 1 in our screenshot above) or Speech (on iOS). Type the words you want to use (2), tap the upload button and Grok will reprocess the video to make the subject speak them. Clips only last for six seconds, so keep the speech short.

Phone and Tablet Tips

ANDROID

Turn web pages into podcasts in Chrome

Google has updated the 'Read aloud' feature in the Android version of Chrome (www.snipca.com/56805) with an 'AI playback' option. Rather than read the current page in a robotic voice, it uses two more natural-sounding male and female voices to summarise and discuss the content – effectively turning the article into a podcast.

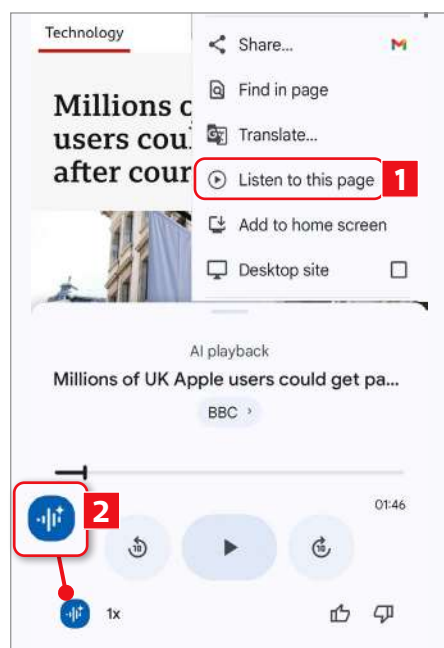
This is similar to the Audio Overviews feature in Google Gemini, and is powered by that AI tool. It provides a more

immersive listening experience than standard 'Read aloud' and means you don't have to hear every word on the page.

To try the new feature in Chrome for Android, tap the three-dot menu icon when viewing a web page and choose 'Listen to this page' (1 in our screenshot below left). You'll see a 'Generating AI playback' message in a panel at the bottom of the screen, then the AI voices will start discussing the content.

Tap the panel to open the full set of options, including a progress bar, speed control and buttons for rewinding or fast-forwarding by 10 seconds. Annoyingly, you can't change the AI voices from the default American accent.

To disable 'AI playback' and listen to pages read aloud in the traditional manner, tap the 'Playback mode' icon in the bottom-left corner (2). This will let you choose from several voices including UK male and female.



iOS

Convert your photos into 3D wallpaper

One of the best new features in iOS and iPadOS 26 is Spatial Scenes. This applies a 3D effect to photos, so they appear to move when you tilt your iPhone or iPad. Spatial-scene pictures can

be set as your lock-screen wallpaper as a more interesting alternative to static images.

To create a spatial scene in iOS/iPadOS 26, open the Photos app and find a suitable picture. The feature works best with portrait shots that have prominent subjects, such as a person, pet or landmark, and well-defined backgrounds.

Tap the hexagon icon in the corner of your screen (see screenshot left) and you'll see the message Generating Spatial Scene. Once complete, tap Add to set the 3D picture as your lock-screen or home-screen wallpaper, or both.

You can also access Spatial Scenes from your lock screen. Long-press your locked screen, tap the plus-sign icon in the bottom-right corner and look for already-created pictures in the Spatial Scenes section. Choose one of your own photos and tap the hexagon icon to make it 3D.

ANDROID & iOS

Snooze and schedule emails in Proton Mail

In Issue 721's Protect Your Tech section (page 11), we wrote about the new offline mode in the Proton Mail apps for Android (www.snipca.com/55324) and iOS (www.snipca.com/55325). But that's not the only new feature in the excellent **end-to-end encrypted** email app.

The Android version has been updated

BEST NEW APPS

What you should install this fortnight

Snopes

Free

Android www.snipca.com/56816

iOS www.snipca.com/56817

The Snopes website (www.snopes.com) has been checking facts and debunking



myths for over 30 years, and now it finally has a mobile app. This lets you search its huge archive of articles, browse the latest fact checks and compile a reading list of interesting content. There's also a fun 'True or False' game.

Wildling

Free

Android www.snipca.com/56814

iOS www.snipca.com/56815

This app helps you discover nature on your doorstep by recommending outdoor



locations in your area. These include woods, ponds and nature reserves, each accompanied by photos, directions, recommended activities and details of amenities. Wildling also has a digital magazine with nature-related articles and videos.

Kagi News

Free

Android www.snipca.com/56810

iOS www.snipca.com/56811

Kagi News scours the **RSS** feeds of thousands of online news sources to

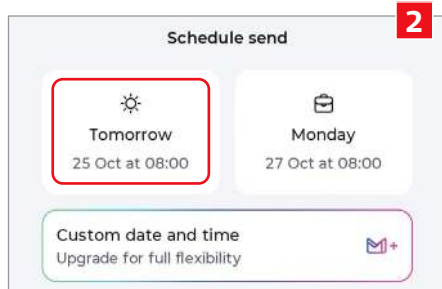
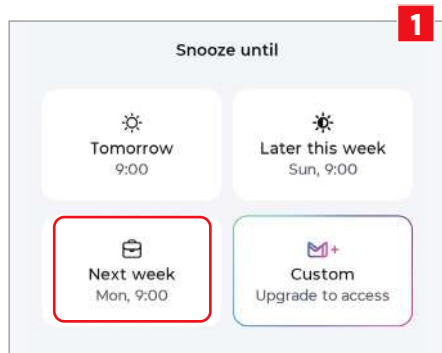


provide you with a daily digest of the most important stories. Tap the app's Settings cog to choose the categories and countries that interest you, specify how many stories to include in each section and select which types of content to prioritise.

with Snooze and Schedule features, bringing it in line with Proton Mail for iOS. The first option lets you delay reading an email until a more convenient time, after which it will reappear in your inbox and you'll receive a notification.

Snooze a message by tapping the three-dot icon on the toolbar and selecting Snooze. Specify whether to snooze it until tomorrow, later in the week or next week (see screenshot 1 below). With a paid-for Proton Mail Plus plan, you can set a custom time. Snoozed emails are moved to a folder of that name where you can 'unsnooze' them.

The Schedule feature lets you delay sending an email until an appropriate time. Tap the clock icon in the top-right corner of the Compose screen and schedule the message to be sent tomorrow (see screenshot 2) or in a couple of days. Again, with Proton Mail Plus, you can select a precise date and time.



ANDROID & iOS

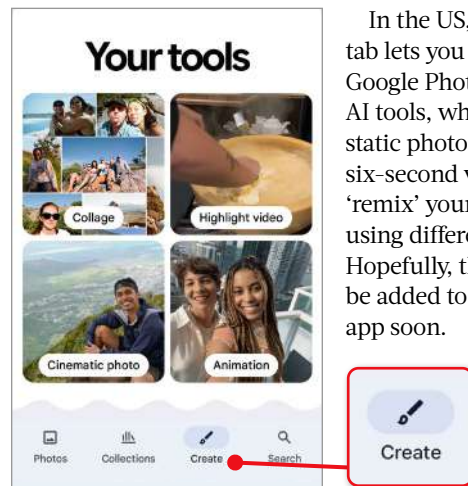
Access creative tools faster in Google Photos

Google Photos has added a Create tab to its app for Android (www.snipca.com/56808) and iOS (www.snipca.com/56809). This makes it much easier to access creative tools when you want to transform your photos into something else.

Previously, you needed to tap the plus-sign at the top of the screen and choose an option under 'Create new'. Now you can simply tap the Create tab on

the bottom toolbar (see screenshot right) to view all available tools.

These include creating a collage of up to six photos or an animation that switches between up to 50 images. You can also turn a picture into a cinematic photo, which adds more depth to the shot and slowly zooms in like a camera. Or create a highlight video featuring photos of a particular person, place or theme.



In the US, the Create tab lets you access Google Photos' new AI tools, which turn static photos into six-second videos, and 'remix' your pictures using different styles. Hopefully, these will be added to the UK app soon.

BEST APPS FOR...

Black Friday deals

Hotukdeals

Free

Android www.snipca.com/56818

iOS www.snipca.com/56819

Hotukdeals offers an easy and reliable way to bag Black Friday bargains. All its offers and discounts are shared and rated by its massive community of UK shoppers, and span categories including Electronics, 'Home & Living' and 'Car & Motorcycle'. Set up alerts to ensure you don't miss deals on specific products and brands.

Best For Finding Black Friday bargains

Idealo

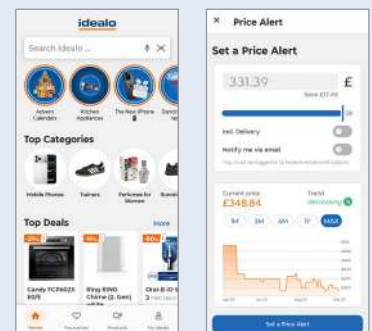
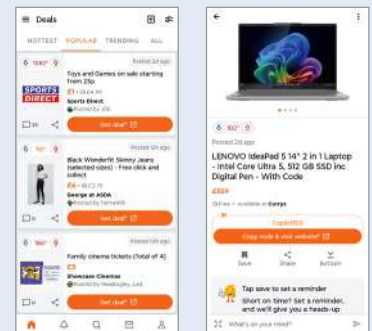
Free

Android www.snipca.com/56820

iOS www.snipca.com/56821

Prices fluctuate over the Black Friday and Cyber Monday long weekend, so use Idealo to keep track. It compares the cost of items across thousands of UK online stores, shows graphs of their price history and notifies you when their price drops below your target amount. Idealo also recommends Black Friday deals on its Home tab.

Best For Tracking product prices



Black Friday: Shopping & Deals

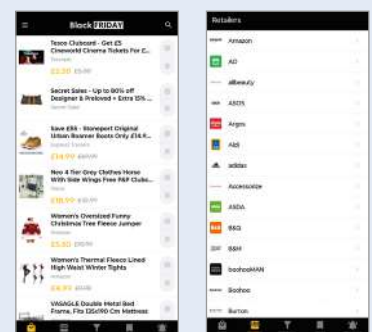
Free

Android www.snipca.com/56822

iOS www.snipca.com/56823

This app is constantly updated over the Black Friday period to list the latest offers from major UK stores. Tap one to view it on the relevant website or mobile app (if you have it installed). Usefully, you can browse by retailer as well as category, from Amazon to Zavvi. See our Cover Feature on page 50 for more Amazon shopping hacks.

Best For Deals from specific stores



WINDOWS 10 & 11

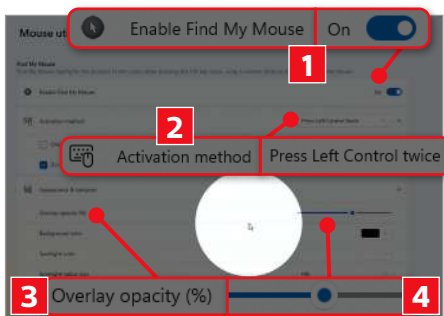
Make it easier to find your mouse cursor



Version 0.95 of PowerToys, released in October, adds

transparency to the Find My Mouse tool. This makes the circle around the cursor partially or fully transparent, so you can locate your pointer without blocking what's underneath.

Launch PowerToys then click 'Input/Output' on the left and select 'Mouse utilities'. Now turn on 'Enable Find My Mouse' (1 in our screenshot below) and set your preferred 'Activation method' that turns on the tool (2). Next click 'Appearance & behavior' and move 'Overlay opacity' (3) to set the transparency. Choose higher opacity when you need to spot the cursor quickly, such as on multiple monitors or when giving presentations. Here, we've set the opacity to 75 (4).

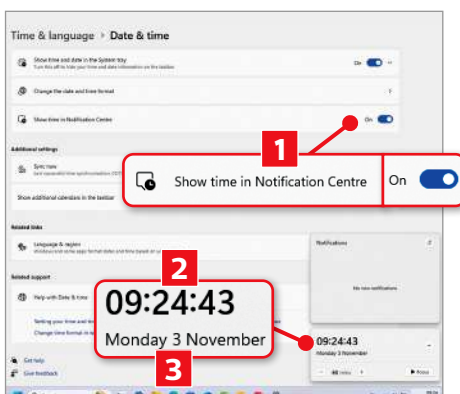


WINDOWS 11

Show time with seconds in notification centre

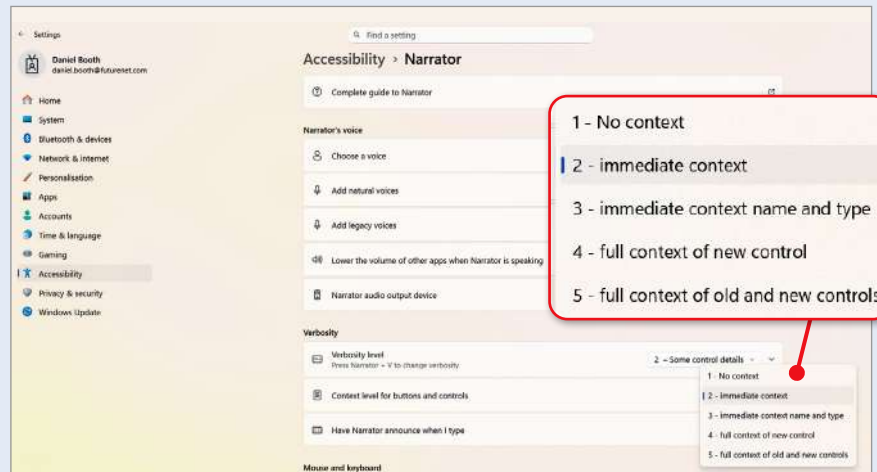


Microsoft has reinstated time with seconds in the notification centre – a Windows 10 feature it removed when it launched Windows 11 in 2021. To turn it on, press Windows key+I to open Settings then click 'Time & language' on the left followed by 'Date & time'. Now click the 'Show time in Notification Centre' slider so it turns blue



WINDOWS 10 & 11

Set how much detail Narrator reads



By default, Narrator will read what a button or box does in Windows, but won't tell you whether it is a button, box, slider or other type of control. For example, it will say 'Save' or 'Close' but not say how that command appears. You can change this so Narrator gives more detail about the appearance of the command.

Press 'Windows key+Ctrl+N' to open Narrator's settings, then scroll to the Verbosity section. 'Immediate context' should be set as the default in the

'Context level for buttons and controls' dropdown menu (see screenshot). If you choose option 3 ('immediate context name and type') Narrator will say the control's name and its type (for example, 'Save button'). Choose option 4 ('full context of new control') and it will add whether an option is enabled or disabled. Option 5 ('full context of old and new controls') adds details of both the control you're leaving and the one you're moving to. Play around with different options until it gives you the required level of detail.

(1 in our screenshot below left). When done, click the time at the bottom right of your taskbar and you'll see it in hours, minutes and seconds (2) just above the date (3).

WINDOWS 11

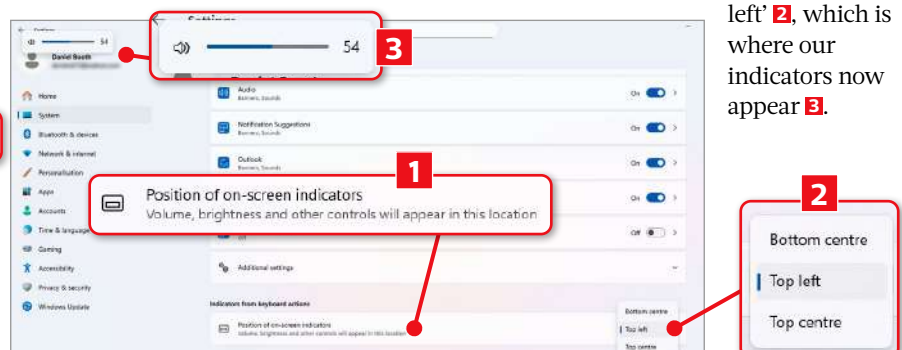
Move where volume and brightness indicators appear



You can now choose where the indicators for brightness, volume and airplane mode appear when

you press their respective buttons on your keyboard. It also works for creating a **virtual desktop** when pressing Windows+Ctrl+D.

Press Windows key+I to open Settings then click System on the left followed by Notifications on the right. Scroll down to the bottom and click the 'Position of on-screen indicators' dropdown menu and choose where you want them to appear (1 in our screenshot below). The default is 'Bottom centre'. We chose 'Top left' (2), which is

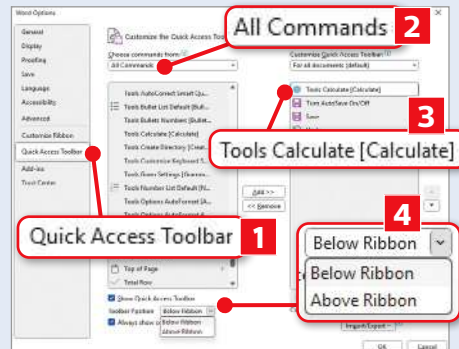


MICROSOFT WORD

Add a calculator to the Quick Access Toolbar

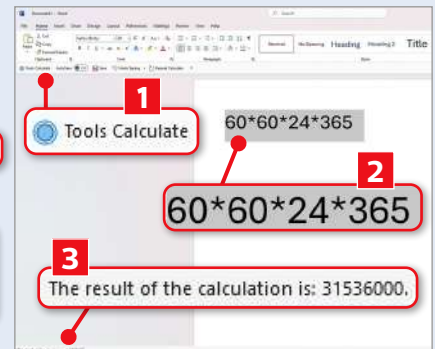
You can add a calculator to Word's Quick Access Toolbar, making it easy to perform quick sums. Click 'File' at the top left then Options at the bottom of the menu. Now, in the box that appears, click Quick Access Toolbar on the left (1 in our screenshot right), then choose All Commands from the 'Choose commands from:' dropdown menu (2).

Now scroll down to 'Tools Calculate [Calculate]' (or just Calculate in older versions of Word) and double-click it so it appears on the right (3). Next, decide whether you want the Quick Access Toolbar to appear above or below the ribbon (4) – we've chosen



below. Click OK to confirm.

Now open a document and you should see the Tools Calculate button appear, either above or, as in our example, below the ribbon (1 in screenshot above right).



Write a sum, click to highlight it (2), then click the Tools Calculate button. You'll see the answer at the bottom left (3). For multiplication, remember to type an asterisk (*) instead of an X.

OUTLOOK.COM

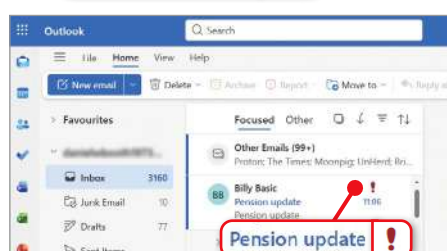
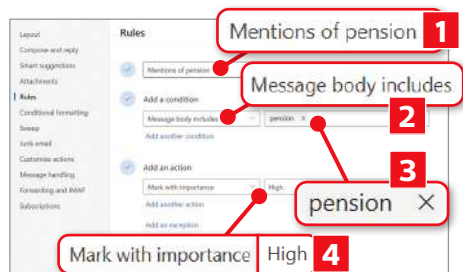
Mark emails as high importance



One of the most useful rules you can set in Outlook.com is to automatically mark emails containing a specific word or phrase as important. Here, we'll do this for emails containing the word 'pension'.

Click the top-right Settings cog then Rules on the left. Now click the blue 'Add new rule' button then give it a name (1 in top screenshot below). Next, click 'Select a condition' and choose 'Message body includes' under Keywords (2). In the box that appears, type the word you want Outlook to recognise in the email (3).

Now click 'Select an action' followed by 'Mark with importance' and choose High in the dropdown menu that appears (4).



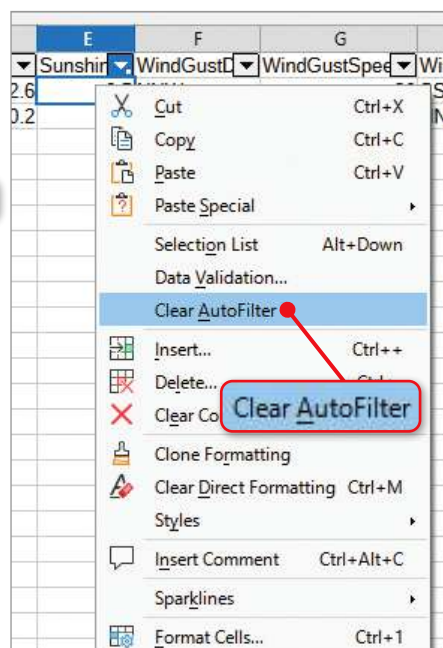
Click Save. From now, any emails that contain your keyword will have a red exclamation mark beside them in your inbox (see bottom screenshot below left).

LIBREOFFICE CALC

Clear AutoFilters in a click



In LibreOffice Calc, AutoFilters let you hide rows in a spreadsheet so you see only the data you need. In Version 25.8, released in August, you can remove an AutoFilter directly from a column's right-click menu. Right-click a cell in a filtered column then select Clear AutoFilter (see screenshot below). Before,



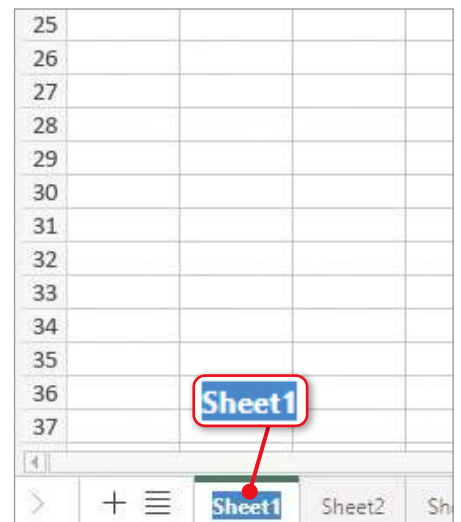
if you wanted to make all your rows visible again, you had to click Data then AutoFilter (though this still works).

ONLYOFFICE

Rename spreadsheets by double-clicking



OnlyOffice 9.1, released in October, makes it easier to rename spreadsheets. Previously, you had to right-click the spreadsheet tab and select Rename. This would highlight the name in the tab, ready for you to type. Now you can simply double-click the tab to highlight the name (see screenshot below). Microsoft Excel already works this way, while double-clicking in LibreOffice Calc opens a box where you rename the spreadsheet.



In The Club



Run a club or society? Here's how your tech can make it easier

Collaborate for free in OnlyOffice

If you've ever had to work with other club members to produce documents (agendas, newsletters, flyers and so on), then you've probably discovered how tricky collaboration can be. Emailing files back and forth quickly creates a tangle of versions, making it hard to keep track of which one is the most up to date. And not everyone has access to Microsoft 365 – or wants to pay for a subscription, just to work together in Word.

Thankfully, there are free options available, including OnlyOffice – a suite of tools for editing documents, spreadsheets and presentations. Through its DocSpace platform, you and other club members can create secure shared 'rooms' where you can upload and work on documents together, with changes saved automatically. OnlyOffice's free Startup plan lacks some of the paid-for tier's advanced features and limits the number of rooms you can use, but it offers everything most small clubs and societies are likely to need.

Unlike Google Docs, OnlyOffice doesn't require everyone to have a Google account, and its interface should feel very familiar to anyone who's used Microsoft Office. The latest version (9.1) even adds smarter collaboration tools, including the ability to customise how comments are shown in the sidebar.

Create an account and change your password

You can use OnlyOffice DocSpace from within your web browser, though there are installable OnlyOffice apps for Windows, macOS and Linux available for download at www.snipca.com/56801, if you prefer. OnlyOffice also offers free apps for Android (www.snipca.com/56799) and Apple devices (www.snipca.com/56800).

To set things up on a PC, go to www.snipca.com/56798, enter your email address in the box, click 'Create now' and



Change your language and default password, and set up two-factor authentication

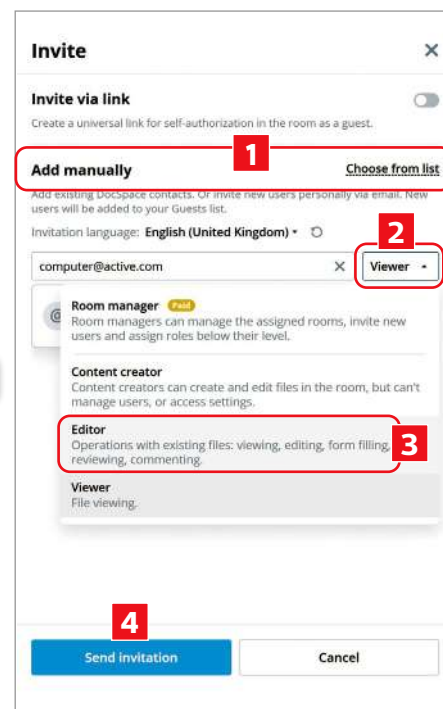
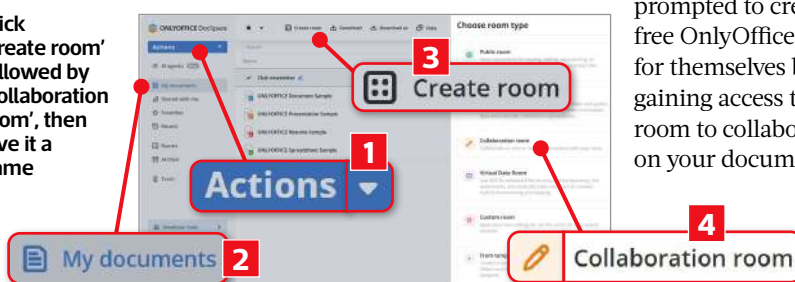
follow the steps to sign up for an account, clicking the link in the confirmation email when prompted.

Once you've logged in, we recommend clicking Administrator (1 in our screenshot above), then changing your language to 'English (United Kingdom)' 2, as OnlyOffice defaults to US English. It's also worth clicking the pencil icon next to Password 3 and following the password-reset process to change your default password to one of your choice. Enabling two-factor authentication 4 adds a further layer of security.

Create a document and add members

Click the Actions button (1 in our screenshot below) and select Document. Type a name for your document and click Create. Now click 'My documents' 2 and click the file you just created. At the top of the screen, you'll see the option to 'Create room' 3 – click this, then select 'Collaboration room' 4 from the options

Click 'Create room' followed by 'Collaboration room', then give it a name



Add members to collaborate then select whether you want them to edit documents

that appear on the right. Give your room a name and click Create.

To add other members to the room to collaborate on your document, click the 'Invite contact' icon next to the name of your room. Under 'Add manually' (1 in our screenshot above), enter the email address for each person you want to invite. Click 'Viewer' 2 and select Editor 3 if you want them to be able to edit your document, then click 'invite as guest'. Once you've done this for all your collaborators, click 'Send invitation' 4.

Your invitees will receive a link via email – when they click this, they'll be taken to a page where they'll be prompted to create a free OnlyOffice account for themselves before gaining access to your room to collaborate on your document.

What's All the Fuss About...

Windows updates

You'll now have a clearer idea of what Microsoft installs on your PC

What are they?

Pieces of software released by Microsoft for a variety of reasons, but mostly to add features, fix faults, patch security holes and replace out-of-date **drivers**. They're a necessary evil of using Windows and despite aiming to solve problems can cause plenty of their own. But if any updates go wrong in future, you'll now have a better idea which were to blame.

Why's that?

Because Microsoft has renamed updates to make them simpler, so they should be easier to understand.

Wait – Microsoft has made something simpler? Should I soon expect Hell to freeze over too?

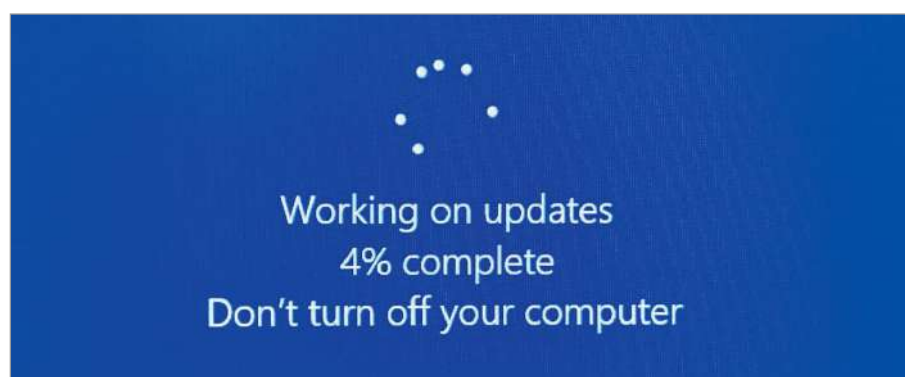
Very droll. It's true that Microsoft seems to delight in using baffling jargon rather than plain English, but maybe that's finally changing. It wants the new names for updates to be "simplified and standardized".

Can you give an example?

Yes, take those compulsory security updates that arrive on the second Tuesday of every month – commonly known as 'Patch Tuesday'. These will now be called – wait for it – 'Security Updates'.

Wow, revolutionary! Is that it?

No, it will be followed by two numbers – for example, KB5067036 and 26200.7019. The first is the Knowledge Base (KB) number, which is applied to every Windows update. To see what they refer



to, visit Microsoft's Update Catalog (www.snipca.com/56924) and type it into the top-right box.

The second is the build number of Windows the update is for. A build is like a snapshot of Windows at a specific time, containing all the previous updates, fixes, features and so on. Build number 26200 is for version 25H2 of Windows 11. Subsequent updates to 25H2 will have incremental build numbers, such as 26200.7019 (released on 28 October).

To check which build you have type **about** into your Start menu, press Enter, then scroll down to 'Windows specifications' and look next to 'OS build'.

Are other updates being renamed?

Yes, most notably updates that add features and fix flaws, but don't contain security patches. These will now be called Preview Updates. They usually arrive on Patch Tuesday and are optional. Also being renamed are updates for drivers in devices like printers, webcams, speakers

(www.snipca.com/56903). They'll appear in the Windows Update section of Settings, and also in the 'Update history' page (1 in our screenshot below left).

Microsoft also planned to remove the dates from the update titles, but reversed this following a backlash from IT managers (see www.snipca.com/56929).

What were these updates called before?

They had obscure names like Cumulative Update 2, Monthly Rollup Preview and Preview of Quality Updates. These titles were aimed more at IT managers controlling a fleet of computers than average people using just a single machine at home. They also contained technical details about the type of processor and operating system the update was for. Microsoft now says these are "unnecessary" and has belatedly realised that updates should be named "with users in mind".

You don't say! Why did it take Microsoft so long?

Good question. It might be to do with AI, as so much is these days. One of the other renamed updates is 'AI Component Update', which are for AI tools such as Copilot. With these playing a bigger role in Windows, the company presumably wants to distinguish AI updates from run-of-the-mill security and preview updates. Or perhaps someone at Microsoft had a rare outbreak of common sense. Whatever the truth, we're off to check the temperature of the underworld.



Microsoft has finally given Windows updates simpler names

and so on. These will now be called – again, wait for it – 'Driver Updates', preceded by the name of the manufacturer and followed by an update number. Read Microsoft's blog to see which other updates are being renamed

ULTIMATE HACKS FOR amazon



Enhance your Amazon experience by unlocking amazing discounts, accessing hidden features and removing device restrictions. **Robert Irvine** reveals 22 of the most useful secret tricks

When Amazon Web Services (AWS) suffered a major global outage at the end of October, many of us initially feared Amazon itself had been hacked. Thankfully, that wasn't the case because AWS is separate from the retail business, and the problem was caused by a software bug rather than hackers.

Although Amazon has suffered a few security incidents – for example in 2018, when some customer information was exposed just before Black Friday (www.snipca.com/56886) – it has never been hacked in its 30 years of existence. Until now, that is, because we're going to reveal the best ways *you* can hack Amazon.

Before you call the cyber police on us, we don't mean breaking into Amazon's systems and stealing account data, but using secret tricks to improve your favourite Amazon services and devices. Some of our hacks relate to Amazon features you may have missed, either because they're tucked away or were introduced only recently. Others involve using clever third-party tools to unlock hidden discounts and improve your Amazon experience.

Whether you want to save money on your Black Friday and Christmas shopping, fix frustrations with Prime Video and Alexa, or beat restrictions on your Fire TV or tablet, we've got the hacks you need. Most are free, all are legal, and they'll make Amazon cheaper, easier and more flexible to use.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Find the best items on Amazon that cost less than £10
- Set up price-drop alerts to get the best Black Friday deals
- Fast-forward through the ad breaks on Prime Video TV shows
- Free up space on a Fire TV Stick without uninstalling apps
- Install the Google Play Store on your Fire tablet
- Turn your Echo speaker into a two-way intercom

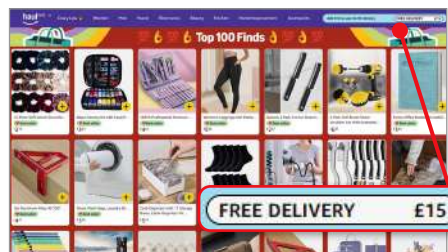
SECRET HACKS FOR AMAZON SHOPPING

Buy ultra-affordable items from Amazon Haul

Whether you're looking for stocking fillers or useful items for yourself and your home, you'll find bargains galore at Amazon Haul (www.snipca.com/56828). Launched in the UK in August, this new section of the store – presumably inspired by Temu (www.snipca.com/56861) – sells thousands of 'ultra-affordable' products for under £20. The majority are priced at less than £10.

Haul sells everything from clothes and electronics to kitchen utensils and DIY tools, or you can head straight to the 'Crazy low' and 'Under £5' categories to find the very cheapest deals. There's also a section of the top 100 'finds' – at the time of writing these included a 115-piece precision screwdriver kit for £5.84, a smart leather wallet for £6.37 and a two-pack cable holder for just £1.45.

Unlike the main Amazon store, you only need to spend £15 at Amazon Haul to qualify for free delivery (see screenshot below), though it may take a week for your order to arrive.



Amazon Haul sells bargain-price products with free delivery over £15

Buy returned and refurbished products

You can save a lot of money on your Black Friday and Christmas shopping – or at any other time of year – by buying items from Amazon that are 'like-new' rather than brand new. This allows you to purchase products you might not otherwise be able to afford, which are still in full working order and covered by Amazon's 30-day return policy.

Formerly called Amazon Warehouse, Amazon Resale (www.snipca.com/56829) sells goods that have been returned to the store, often for 30-per-cent less than their original price. Its categories include 'Computers & Accessories', 'Home & Kitchen' and Books.

Amazon grades the condition of Resale products, from 'Used – Acceptable' (may have cosmetic damage or missing parts)



Amazon Renewed sells refurbished products with a one-year warranty

to 'Used – Like New' (perfect condition with all accessories, but "packaging may bear some damage").

If that doesn't sound good enough – especially for a Christmas present – try Amazon Renewed (www.snipca.com/56830). This section of the store sells electronic items that have been professionally refurbished by the manufacturers or approved Amazon partners, then inspected and rigorously tested so they look and function like new. Renewed is particularly useful for bargain-price laptops, smartphones and kitchen appliances, and refurbished models of Amazon's own products.

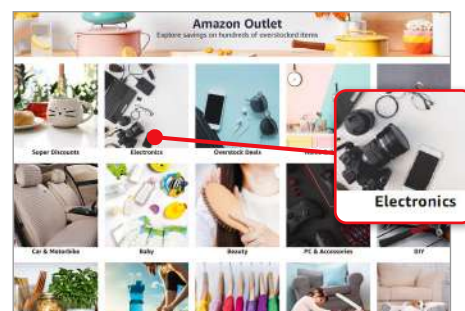
We spotted a 'certified refurbished' Ring Battery Video Doorbell Pro for £99 (40 per cent off the new price of £180) and a Kindle Paperwhite (16GB) for £115 (new price £144, see screenshot above). All products sold through Amazon Renewed are covered by Amazon's one-year guarantee.

Discover secret bargains on Amazon Outlet

Amazon's other secret discount section is Amazon Outlet (www.snipca.com/56831). This sells thousands of overstocked and end-of-line products for knockdown prices, which is handy if you're not bothered about buying the best-known brands or latest models.

Unlike Amazon Resale and Renewed, Outlet items are brand new, supplied in their original packaging and covered by the manufacturer's warranty. The homepage deals are decidedly random – a DAB radio, a golf umbrella and an inflatable chicken costume on our last visit – so it's best to browse by category and filter the results by price.

The Electronics section (see



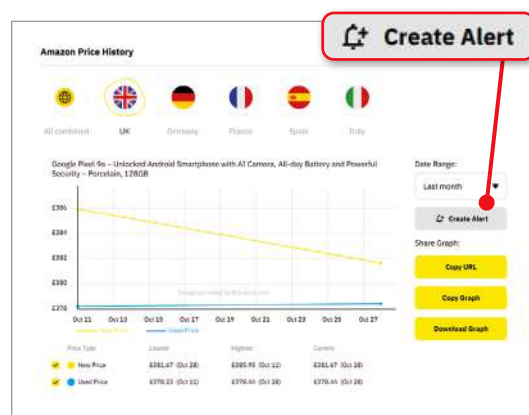
Buy new tech products for knockdown prices from Amazon Outlet

screenshot above) is a good source of discounted Amazon Basics products such as batteries and HDMI cables, as well as Otterbox phone cases, JVC headphones and – surprisingly – Samsung tablets. At the time of writing, the Galaxy Tab A9+ was available for £179 (www.snipca.com/56832), reduced from £225.

Bag the best bargains by tracking prices

Most savvy shoppers are familiar with CamelCamelCamel (www.snipca.com/56833), which tracks the price histories of products on Amazon, and alerts you when they're reduced to your desired amount. While we're still happy to use that excellent tool, it's worth trying an alternative method in the run-up to Christmas.

Bobalob (www.snipca.com/56834) is predominantly a price-comparison service, which compares the price of goods across Amazon's stores in the UK, France, Italy, Germany and Spain. This can save you money if an item is available for less on the continent, if you don't mind waiting longer for delivery and potentially paying import fees at checkout. Helpfully, Bobalob tells you the estimated delivery costs for UK and EU



Track product prices across Amazon's UK and EU stores using Bobalob

stores in its price-comparison tables, and lets you click through to those sites to make your purchase.

Sign up for a free Bobalob account to unlock price-drop alerts (see screenshot on page 51) and price-history graphs, which show both new and used prices. As with CamelCamelCamel, to view price information simply paste the URL of an Amazon item into Bobalob's search box.

Unlike that site, Bobalob doesn't have a browser extension, and you'll need a currency-conversion tool (or ask Google) to convert Euros into pounds. Remember too that electrical goods bought from Europe may have EU plugs.

Save money using Amazon vouchers

Whenever you buy something from Amazon, it's worth checking if there's a voucher available that could save you money on the purchase. This detail will be listed under the price in your search results and on the product page – for example, 'Apply 20% voucher' or 'Save £5 with voucher' – but it's easy to miss among all the other information. Tick the voucher box before adding the item to your basket to claim your discount.

To ensure you don't miss any savings in the run-up to Christmas, bookmark Amazon's Vouchers page (www.snipca.com/56835). This tells you upfront how much you'll pay once vouchers are applied to the listed products (1 in our screenshot above right).

You can browse the deals by department, such as 'Computers & Accessories', 'Electronics & Photos' and 'Home & Kitchen', and filter the results by price and discount percentage (2).

Find cheap items to get free delivery

Last year, Amazon increased its free-delivery threshold for non-Prime

Visit Amazon's Vouchers page to discover big discounts for products

members to £35. Spend below that amount and you'll need to pay £4.99 for standard delivery (£5.99 for next day).

We've previously recommended Super Saver Delivery Tool (www.snipca.com/56836) as the best way to bump up your Amazon order to £35 and qualify for free delivery. It finds cheap items that make up the difference in price, but recently we've found its suggestions rather limited – mainly toiletries and sweets.

An alternative option is LatestDeals.co.uk's Amazon Free Delivery Tool (www.snipca.com/56851). Enter the current total of your basket and it will calculate how much more you need to spend to reach £35 (see screenshot below left). Select an Amazon department from the dropdown menu, click Search and the tool will open an Amazon web page showing matching results.

By default, these items are priced from as low as 20p, so use the Price filter on the left to narrow down the results to your required amount. It's not as speedy a method as Super Saver Delivery Tool, but you get a much broader choice. To make up a £3 shortfall, we found a

four-pack of AA batteries, an HDMI cable and a Bluetooth adapter, among other useful items in the Electronics department.

Don't forget that including a book in your Amazon order reduces the free-delivery threshold to £10.

Simplify shopping using Amazon's AI

Amazon recently introduced an AI-powered feature called Help Me Decide (www.snipca.com/56837). This recommends the best products to buy based on your browsing history and preferences.

Scan product photos with Lens AI to find similar items on Amazon

Frustratingly, it's currently limited to the US, though it could arrive in the UK before Christmas. In the meantime, you can ask Amazon's AI assistant Rufus for shopping advice and read AI summaries of customer reviews.

The Amazon mobile app (www.snipca.com/56912) includes a Lens AI feature (see screenshot above), which scans barcodes and photos of products to find the same or similar items in the store. This saves you overpaying for high-street goods, and having to search for items manually. Lens AI now includes a 'Circle to Search' option that lets you circle specific items when there are several in the picture.

Bump up your order to £35 using Amazon Free Delivery Tool

SECRET HACKS FOR AMAZON PRIME VIDEO

Download TV and films to your PC

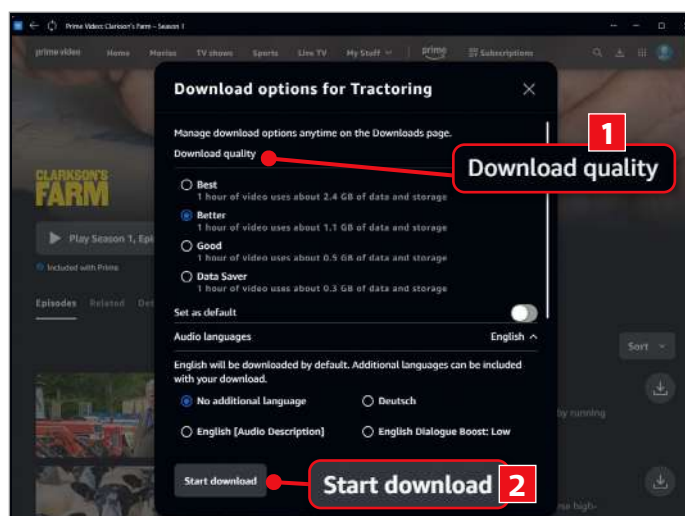
Amazon Prime Video is now one of the only streaming services – along with Apple TV+ – to let you download its TV shows and films to your PC. This means you can watch them offline and won't experience **buffering** if your internet connection becomes slow and unreliable.

Install the Prime Video app for Windows 10 and 11 (www.snipca.com/56838), find a TV episode or movie you want to play offline, and click the Download button. Select the 'Download quality' (1 in our screenshot right) – from Data Saver to Best – depending on your connection speed and available storage, then click 'Start download' 2.

Click the Downloads icon in the top-right corner of the app to access your saved shows and films. You have 30 days to watch videos after downloading, and 48 hours once you start playing them. The same applies to your downloads in the Prime Video mobile app.

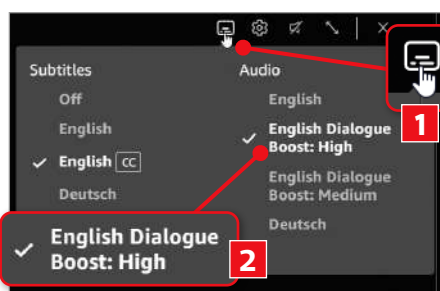
Make dialogue easier to hear

Many TV shows and films suffer from quiet and muffled dialogue, but turning up the volume can hurt your ears when loud music and sound effects kick in. To solve this problem, Prime Video offers a Dialogue Boost feature, which uses AI to isolate and enhance speech without amplifying music and effects.



Watch TV shows and films offline in Amazon Prime Video's Windows app

To activate the feature in the Prime Video web player and its apps for Android, iOS, Windows and Fire TV, select the 'Subtitles and Audio' icon (1 in



Prime Video's Dialogue Boost option makes speech easier to hear

our screenshot below left) while playing a TV show or film. In the Audio menu, choose either the High or Medium option for 'English Dialogue Boost' 2.

Note that Dialogue Boost isn't available for every programme and movie.

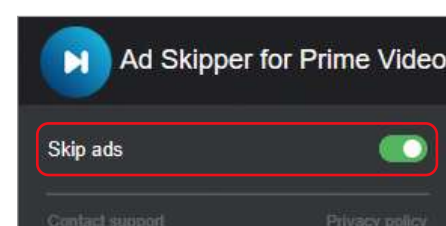
Fast-forward ads in the web player

Last year, Amazon started charging an extra £2.99 a month to watch Prime Video without adverts. That's on top of your £8.99 subscription, and is in line with the ad-free plans offered by Netflix, Disney+ and other streaming services.

If you don't want to pay more to remove ads, you can skip them – in the Prime Video web player, at least – using the Chromium extension 'Ad Skipper for Prime Video' (www.snipca.com/56843). This mutes and fast-forwards the ads before and during TV shows and films, to stop them interrupting your viewing.

The extension works automatically, provided its 'Skip ads' setting is switched on (see screenshot below), though it won't skip ads on Prime Video's **FAST** channels or live sporting events.

Amazon doesn't have a specific policy prohibiting ad blockers, but it may eventually block this one.



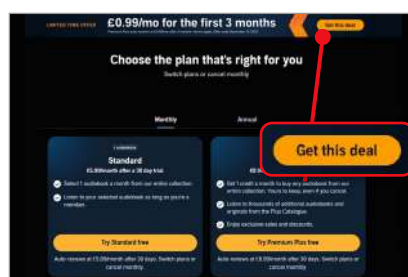
'Ad Skipper for Prime Video' fast-forwards adverts in TV shows

Get a free audiobook from Audible

Amazon now offers several ways to get free and cheap audiobooks from its Audible service (www.audible.co.uk). Earlier this year, it introduced a new Audible Standard plan, which entitles you to listen to one audiobook a month. This costs £5.99 per month, but its 30-day free trial means you don't need to pay anything for your first audiobook – just remember to cancel before the trial ends.

The price of an Audible Premium Plus plan, which lets you listen to thousands of audiobooks and download one to keep each month using a free credit, has increased from £7.99 to £8.99. But Amazon is currently running an offer that gives you access to Premium Plus for just 99p a month for the first three months.

This ends on 16 December – go to the Audible Plan Picker (www.snipca.com/56844) and click 'Get this deal' at the



top of the page (see screenshot). Amazon says the audiobooks you buy with Premium Plus credits are "yours to keep, even if you cancel", so you effectively get three titles for just £2.97. Additionally, Amazon Music Unlimited now includes Audible (www.snipca.com/56847) and lets you listen to one free audiobook a month. The music-streaming service costs £11.99 a month (£10.99 for Prime members), but has a 30-day free trial.

SECRET HACKS FOR RING DOORBELLS

See who's at the door without opening the Ring app

When the Ring app alerts you to motion outside your door, you can switch to Live View to see who's there. However, this sometimes proves pointless if the caller has already gone or the motion Ring detected was from a passing pedestrian, vehicle or animal.

To avoid the hassle of opening the app for every notification, switch on Ring's Video Preview Alerts, which it added to its Rich Notifications feature last year. These alerts show you video previews of motion captured by your doorbell. Previously, you could only see snapshot images.

After watching the preview, decide whether to open Live View in the Ring app to see what's happening now, or review the full video later. Video Preview Alerts is available with all Ring Home subscriptions, from Basic to Premium.

To activate the option, tap the three-line menu icon in the top-left corner of the Ring dashboard, select Devices and



See what is going on at your door without opening the app.

Rich Notifications

Include snapshots in notifications.

[Learn More](#)

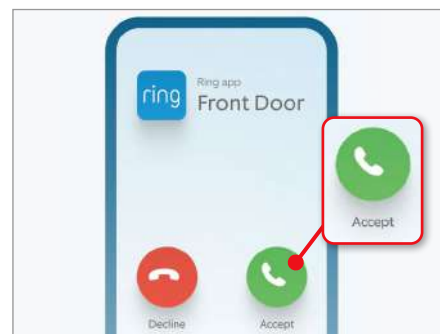


Turn on Ring's Rich Notifications to see video previews of activity in front of your door

tap your Ring doorbell. Choose 'Device Settings', then select Notification Settings and switch on Rich Notifications (see screenshot above).

Receive calls when someone's at your door

The 'Two-way talk' option in Ring's Live View lets you speak to visitors remotely when you can't (or don't want to) open the door. This has now been augmented by a Doorbell Calls feature, which rings and vibrates your phone when someone presses your doorbell.



Doorbell Calls calls you when someone presses your doorbell

When you answer the call by tapping Accept (see screenshot above), it starts a live video feed so you can see who you're talking to. It's a much quicker way of interacting with callers than 'Two-way talk' and helps you instantly identify imposters.

To use Doorbell Calls, you need a Ring Home Standard or Premium subscription. Go into your Device Settings in the Ring app, tap Notification Settings and switch on Doorbell Calls.

Computer **active** **READER OFFER!**

Buy Windows 11 Pro for just ~~£79.99~~ £69.99!



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JUST SO YOU KNOW...

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SECRET HACKS FOR FIRE TV DEVICES

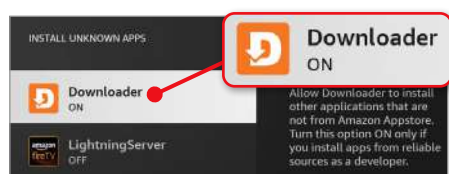
Sideload Fire TV apps while you still can

Amazon is clamping down on users **sideloading** apps from outside its Appstore on Fire TV devices. Earlier this year it blocked the installation of several third-party apps, for anti-piracy reasons, and now has a 'blocklist' of apps that you can't sideload (see page 7). Its new TV operating system, Vega OS, removes the sideloading option altogether (www.snipca.com/56860).

However, unless you've just bought the new Vega-powered Fire TV Stick 4K Select (see box right), and provided you're not trying to stream copyrighted content for free, it's currently still possible to sideload apps on your Fire stick. This lets you install useful tools that aren't available in the Amazon Appstore.

Before you can sideload apps, you'll need to enable Developer Options on your Fire TV device. Open 'Settings' on your home screen and choose My Fire TV, then About. Select the name of your device until you see the message 'You are now a developer'.

Next, install Downloader from the Amazon Appstore (www.snipca.com/56852). Launch the app, grant it permission to access files on your device and choose OK. Go back to Developer Options, select 'Install unknown apps' and set Downloader to 'On' (see screenshot below).



Install TV apps from outside the Amazon Appstore using Downloader

You can now use the Downloader app to sideload apps. Either enter the name, URL or code of an **APK** file in the address bar/search box, or use the browser to visit a trustworthy source such as APKMirror (www.apkmirror.com).

Once the APK file has downloaded, select Install to sideload the app on your Fire TV device. Its tile will be added to the 'Your Apps & Channels' screen.

Remove and disable unwanted apps

Fire TV sticks don't include much storage, so you may need to uninstall rarely used apps to make room for new ones. This can be a frustrating task, especially

How the new Fire stick blocks hacks

Amazon's latest streaming device, the Fire TV Stick 4K Select (pictured), rules out several of our favourite hacks. On sale now for £50 (www.snipca.com/56857), it not only prevents you from sideloading apps (see left), but doesn't allow file downloaders and managers such as the popular Downloader and ES File Explorer.

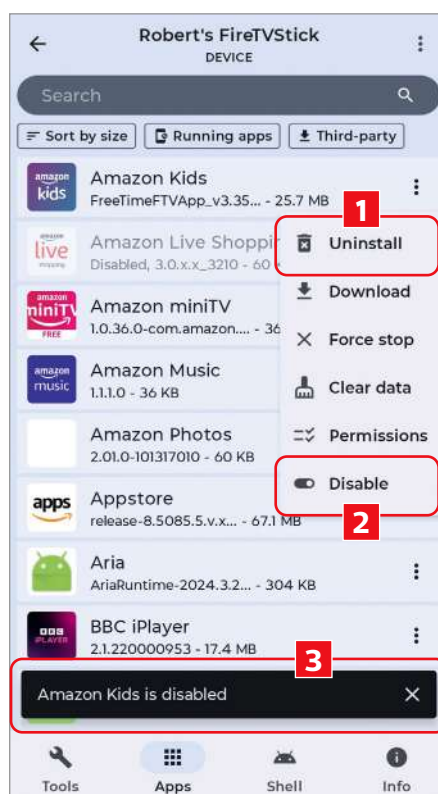
You can't even install a **VPN** because the new Vega OS, based on Linux not Android, doesn't yet support them.



NordVPN says it's updated its app in readiness (www.snipca.com/56864).

Developers of other apps will also have to rewrite their **code** for Vega. Major streaming services, including Netflix, BBC iPlayer and ITVX, have already done so.

It's worth bearing those restrictions in mind if you're thinking of buying the Fire TV Stick 4K Select in the Black Friday sales – either as a gift or for yourself.



atvTools lets you uninstall and disable apps on your Fire TV stick

because some built-in apps can't be removed – including Amazon Photos, Music, Kids and Prime Video.

The mobile app atvTools (Android www.snipca.com/56845; iOS www.snipca.com/56846) lets you uninstall apps with a couple of taps. You'll need to upgrade to its Premium version (£1.89 on Android; 99p on iOS), and enable 'debugging' on your Fire stick. Go to Developer Options (see previous tip) and switch on ADB Debugging.

Once that's done, atvTools will

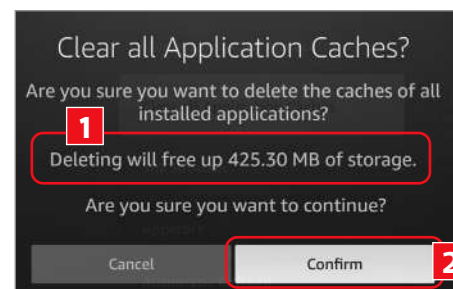
automatically detect your Fire TV device. Tap the Apps tab to view a list of installed apps, including hidden Amazon junk such as Live Shopping. Press the three-dot icon next to an unwanted app and choose Uninstall (1 in our screenshot left). If the app can't be removed, tap Disable instead (2) to stop it using storage and memory in the background. This will be confirmed in a message at the bottom (3).

Clear all app caches in one go

A recent Fire TV update added the useful ability to clear the **caches** of all installed apps in one go. This frees up valuable storage without you uninstalling anything, and makes your streaming device faster and less prone to crash.

Previously, you needed to clear the cache of each app individually. With the new option, go to Settings then Applications, and select 'Clear All application Caches'. Your Fire TV device will tell how much storage you'll free up (1 in our screenshot below) – choose Confirm (2) to perform the deletion.

If you don't see the option, ensure your device is up to date – go to Settings then My Fire TV, select About and choose 'Check for Updates'.



A new Fire TV option clears the caches of all your apps in one go

SECRET HACKS FOR FIRE TABLETS & KINDLES

Install any Android app on your Fire tablet

Reports suggest Amazon is working on a new Fire tablet (codenamed Kittyhawk) that will run a full version of Android rather than the modified Fire OS (www.snipca.com/56866). In the meantime, you can make your current Fire tablet more Android-like and versatile using Fire Toolbox.

Available to download from the XDA Forums (www.snipca.com/56868) – the latest version is 42.2 – this free software removes restrictions from Fire tablets released between 2014 and 2023 (newer models are locked down more robustly). Most notably, you can install the Google Play Store to add any Android app to your device.

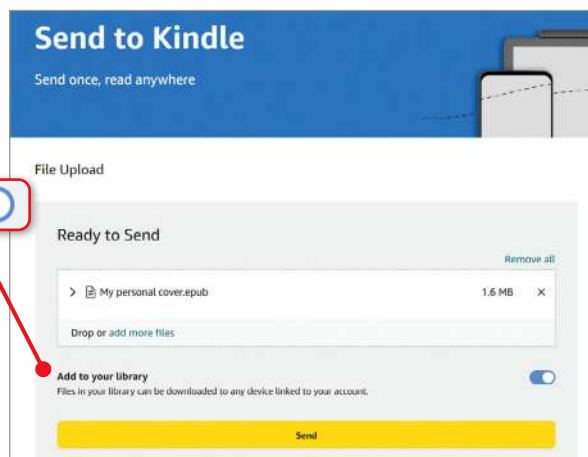
To use Fire Toolbox, you first need to enable USB debugging on your Fire tablet – open the Settings app, scroll down to Device Options and tap it until a message says you're now a developer. Go back to the previous screen, switch on the new Developer Options setting and activate USB Debugging.

Next, connect your tablet to your PC using a USB cable and run the Fire Toolbox EXE file (you'll need to extract this from the ZIP file you downloaded). Click 'More info' then 'Run anyway' if you see a SmartScreen warning. Now save the Fire Toolbox files to the recommended folder.

When the program opens, your Fire tablet will ask if you want to allow USB debugging. Select 'Always allow from this computer' and tap OK. Fire Toolbox will now display its full set of features. Select 'Google Services (Manage)' (see screenshot below) and click Execute Tool to download and transfer the necessary files to your tablet. Reboot when done and tap the new Google Play Store option on your home screen. Tap it, sign into your

Customise your Kindle's lock screen to show your own images

Add to your library



Google account and follow the on-screen instructions to access the store. You can now install compatible Android apps on your Fire tablet.

If you have any problems, check the XDA Forums thread you downloaded Fire Toolbox from. The program doesn't modify your tablet's system partition, so it won't invalidate your warranty.

Customise your Kindle's screensaver

Although it's possible to jailbreak a Kindle e-reader to unlock a few extra features, it's more trouble than it's worth and will void your warranty. So we'll play it safe by revealing a secret tweak for customising your lock screen.

By default, Amazon shows abstract images of pens, pencils and letters as your Kindle's screensaver when it's idle. You can change this to instead show the cover of the book you're currently reading – and make the e-reader look more like a physical book.

Tap the three-dot menu icon in the top-right corner of your home screen and choose Settings. Select 'Screen and brightness' and switch on the option 'Show covers on lock screen'. To test it works, press the Kindle's power button to switch to sleep mode.

To use your own design, convert the image to EPUB format using online

converter Convertio (www.snipca.com/56873). Download the result then upload the EPUB file and the original image to OnlineConverter (www.snipca.com/56874). Click 'Convert' and download the converted file.

Now use Amazon's 'Send to Kindle' feature (www.snipca.com/56875) to send the fake ebook to your Kindle – ensure 'Add to your library' is selected (see screenshot above). Open the file in your library and your image will be set as the screensaver – until you switch to a real ebook.

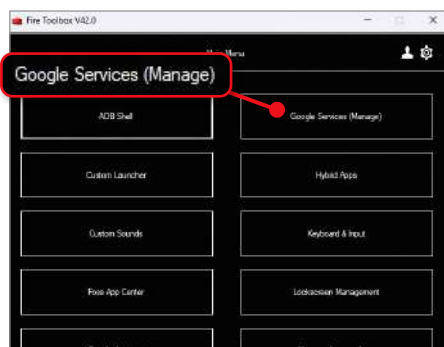
Find free and cheap Kindle ebooks

Amazon's Kindle Book Deals section (www.snipca.com/56878) lists free and cheap (from 99p) ebooks you can download to read on your Kindle or Fire tablet (using the Kindle app). However, it doesn't let you filter the deals by genre, so you have to wade through lots of irrelevant titles to find books of interest.

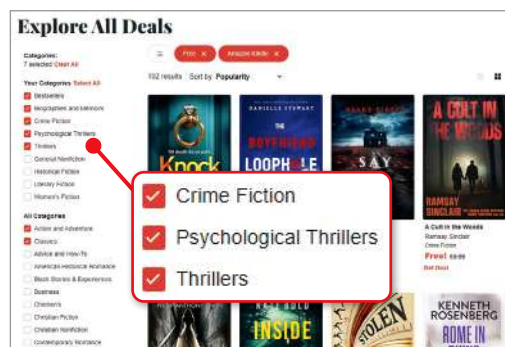
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On the BookBub website, you can filter deals by category (see screenshot left) and popularity, and view all free Kindle books in one place (www.snipca.com/56879). Follow your favorite authors to be notified when their books are discounted.



Install the Google Play Store on your Fire tablet using Fire Toolbox



BookBub makes it easy to find the latest deals on Kindle ebooks

SECRET HACKS FOR ALEXA & ECHO SPEAKERS

Interact quietly using Whisper Mode

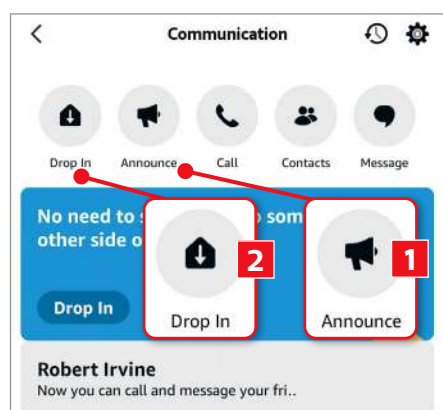
Alexa has an option that lets you interact quietly with your Echo speaker, smart screen or other Alexa-enabled device without disturbing other people. It's called Whisper Mode and is handy for talking to Alexa late at night when everyone else is asleep.

Whisper questions and commands to Alexa and it will respond in a similarly hushed voice. The feature should be enabled by default, but you can activate it yourself by saying: "Alexa, turn on Whisper Mode". Alternatively, go into Settings in the Alexa app, tap Voice Responses and switch on Whisper Mode.

Turn your Echo speaker into an intercom

Amazon offers two ways to turn your Echo speaker into an intercom, so you can talk to other people. The simplest is Announcements, which lets you broadcast messages to Echo and Alexa-enabled devices around your home.

Just say: "Alexa, announce dinner is ready", for example, to broadcast your message. Alternatively, tap the More (three-line) icon in the Alexa app and press Communicate then Announce (1 in our screenshot below). Speak or type your message to send it to other devices.



Talk to people in other rooms through the Alexa app

Chat more naturally with Alexa+

In October, Amazon launched the first devices to feature its new AI assistant, Alexa+. The Echo Dot Max (pictured) and the updated Echo Studio let you interact in a more "conversational and engaging" manner, as if you're talking to an "insightful friend".

As well as answering questions and performing set tasks, Alexa+ remembers your preferences and takes context into account when responding. It saves you having to repeat and clarify your queries,



and works more seamlessly with other smart home devices and third-party services.

Alexa+ will soon be built into all new Echo and Fire TV devices, and is free for Prime members – without Prime, it costs \$19.99 (about £15) per month. However, it's currently limited to the US, and Amazon has yet to confirm when Alexa+ will be available over here. UK models of its new Echo speakers have the standard version of Alexa.

Alexa's Drop In feature goes further by turning Echo speakers and smart screens into two-way intercoms. Tap the Devices tab in the Alexa app, select an Echo device and tap Communication. Press 'Drop In' and switch on the feature for your household. Repeat for each Echo you want to include.

To start an intercom conversation, say "Alexa, drop in on [device name]" – naming your devices by room makes this easier. Say "Alexa hang up" when you've finished. You can also tap Communicate then Drop In (2 in the Alexa app).

Delete your voice recordings from Alexa

Earlier this year, Amazon controversially removed the Do Not Send Voice Recordings option from Alexa. This means anything you say to your Echo speaker or other Alexa device is now shared with Amazon.

You can't stop this happening, but you can delete voice recordings. Tap the More button in the Alexa app, then Alexa Privacy. Press 'Review Voice History' to see all the questions and commands Alexa has recorded and shared.

To wipe them all, tap Filters and choose All History and 'All Devices and profiles'.



Protect your privacy by deleting voice recordings

Press 'Apply Changes' then 'Delete all of my recordings' (see screenshot above). Tap 'Delete' to confirm.

Slow down Alexa's response times

If Alexa sometimes interrupts your queries or says "sorry I didn't catch that" before you've finished speaking, you can make it wait longer before responding. Tap 'More' in the Alexa app and choose Settings then Accessibility.

Select 'Adaptive Listening Mode' and switch on the feature for your Echo speaker and other devices. Amazon says this option is particularly useful for people with dementia. [ca](#)

NEXT ISSUE On sale Wednesday 3 December

**BEST NEW SOFTWARE
FOR 2026** 10 **FREE** programs you'll
need all year round



PLUS

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The image displays three issues of Computer Active magazine. The leftmost cover features the headline 'CHATGPT: STOP IT STEALING YOUR FACE' and 'BEST FREE SOFT'. The middle cover, dated 16-29 JULY 2025, features 'Ditch Google for Proton' and 'WINDOWS 10 GETS ONE MORE YEAR!'. The rightmost cover features 'HACK YOUR CAR'S USB' and 'DON'T PAY FOR MOBILE ROAMING'. A large red starburst graphic with the text 'SAVE 39%' is overlaid on the bottom right of the magazine covers.

Computer active

CHATGPT: STOP IT STEALING YOUR FACE
Stay 100% PRIVATE when using AI p60

BEST FREE SOFT
You'll master in minutes
► 20 advanced programs are actually EASY TO

PLUS
10 PC MISTAKES WE NO LONGER MAKE p62

WINDOWS 10 GETS ONE MORE YEAR!
It's FREE – but there's a catch p6

WE'VE TRAINED AI TO SPOT SCAMS
Now you can do the same p62

HACK YOUR CAR'S USB
✓ Play music
✓ Charge faster
✓ Power dashcams p60

DITCH GOOGLE FOR PROTON
Why it's BETTER & SAFER for email, VPN, passwords and storage p50

✓ Send unhackable emails
✓ Superb FREE VPN
✓ Keep files 100% private
+ Switch now – it's EASY!

PLUS
BIN YOUR FIRE TV STICK p29
We've switched to this new Roku

FIND YOUR HOME SPOT FOR PHONE
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RUN WINDOWS 10 SAFELY

(even if you're online!)

Determined to stick with Windows 10, despite support ending last month? **Jonathan Parkyn** explains what you must do to keep using it safely

So, the dust has settled, the world hasn't ended, and you've decided to stick with Windows 10. You're not alone – millions of people worldwide are saying “no thanks” to Windows 11 and carrying on with its predecessor. We understand the temptation. Maybe your current PC isn't compatible with Windows 11 but still runs fine. Or perhaps you don't fancy paying for expensive new hardware or wrestling with Microsoft's latest changes.

Whatever your reasons, if you stick with Windows 10, you'll need to be a lot more careful than before, especially if you use it online. Without regular security updates, every week that passes increases your exposure to new malware threats. You'll need to take extra precautions, add further layers of protection and rethink how you connect to the web.

1 Stop using Microsoft Defender

In our experience, Microsoft's built-in Defender isn't always as proactive as many third-party antivirus tools, often failing to detect threats on connected USB sticks, for instance. Now that Windows 10 security updates have stopped, it's even less reliable.

Defender relies on Microsoft's cloud threat-intelligence network and Windows Update to spot new malware. This system collects data from Windows devices worldwide, analyses it online and updates Defender to help it recognise threats. With Windows 10 no longer supported, these updates are winding down, so



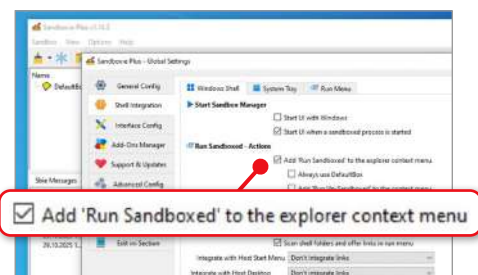
We now sell Norton 360 Deluxe (three devices, 15 months) for under a tenner

Defender's ability to respond quickly to new attacks will fall behind third-party antivirus tools that update independently.

Thankfully, there are still plenty of powerful free antivirus tools. They won't come with paid-for extras such as parental controls, VPNs or backup tools, but you may not need these anyway. Our current paid-for pick is Norton 360 Deluxe 2025, which we now sell for just £9.99 (down from £29.99) on the Computeractive Software Store (three devices, 15 months, www.snipca.com/56890, pictured above). It consistently wins our antivirus group tests, usually followed closely by Bitdefender Total Security (£24.99 from www.snipca.com/56887).

2 Run software in a sandbox

Malware often sneaks on to our PCs when we open unfamiliar files or programs. So, if you frequently run software or open files from unknown sources, you may want to do so in a protected environment, just in case they turn out to be malicious. One option is to



Tick this box if you don't see the 'Run Sandboxed' option when right-clicking a file

use a **virtual PC** such as VirtualBox (www.virtualbox.org), but you'll need a second licence for the guest operating system, plenty of disk space to store it and enough **RAM** and processing power to run two systems simultaneously.

For most users, sandboxing is better. This works like a digital quarantine, letting you run software and open files safely in an isolated area of your PC – then wipes everything clean when you're done. Windows 10 Pro has sandboxing built in. Click Start, type **sandbox**, then click Windows Sandbox.

If it's not there (some PCs don't support it) or if you're using Windows 10 Home, use Sandboxie Plus instead (free from www.snipca.com/56865). Once you've restarted your PC, right-click any file or program and choose Run Sandboxed. If you don't see this option, launch Sandboxie Plus and click Options, Global Settings, Shell Integration, then tick the box next to 'Add 'Run Sandboxed' to the explorer context menu' (see screenshot above), and click OK.

3 Lock down your router

If you're going to be online with Windows 10, your router's first line of defence is more important than ever. Modern models support the latest Wi-Fi and encryption standards, such as WPA3, and are regularly updated to fix security holes. Older models, however, may use outdated security protocols, such as WEP or WPA1 (WPA2 is still secure, but less so than WPA3). Many old routers may well have reached end-of-support themselves – meaning they're no longer updated with security fixes.

As a rule, if your router is more than five years old, consider upgrading it. Our favourite router is TP-Link's Archer BE550 (pictured below, see page 32), which costs £190 from www.snipca.com/55981. It has WPA3, as does the cheaper TP-Link Archer AX55 (£66 from www.snipca.com/53287). Both come with Wi-Fi 7.



Our favourite router, TP-Link's Archer BE550, has WPA3 encryption

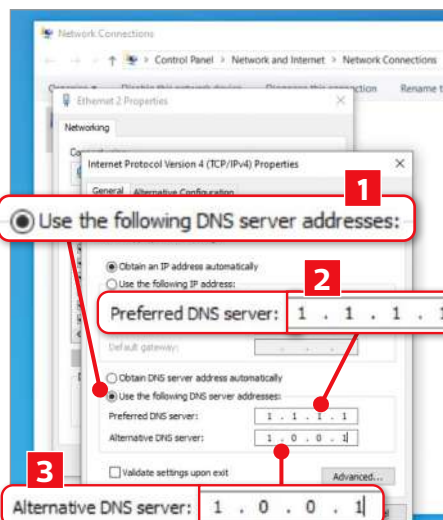
If you'd rather keep your existing router, you should tighten its security where you can. Update its **firmware**, change the default admin password and disable remote management (WAN access) and WPS (if you don't use it). Then make sure your network is set to the strongest WPA (2 or 3) your

router allows. All these settings are configurable via your router's browser-based settings page or its companion app.

4 Change DNS provider

You might also consider changing your DNS provider – the service your PC uses to translate web addresses into IP addresses. Most home routers and internet providers use their own DNS, which doesn't usually block dangerous sites. Switching to a secure, free DNS, such as Cloudflare (1.1.1.1), adds a layer of protection by filtering out domains linked to malware or **phishing**.

Press Windows key+I to open Settings,



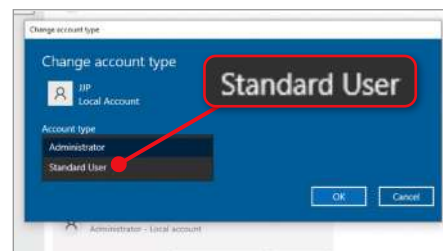
Switch your DNS provider to Cloudflare to filter domains linked to malware or phishing

then click 'Network & Internet' followed by 'Change adapter options'. Next, right-click your active connection, select Properties, 'Internet Protocol Version 4 (TCP/IPv4)', then click Properties. Select 'Use the following DNS server addresses' (1 in our screenshot above), type 1.1.1.1 under 'Preferred DNS server' 2 and 1.0.0.1 under Alternative 3, then click OK twice.

5 Don't sign in as an administrator

When you're logged into Windows as an **administrator**, it's easier for malware to run without your consent. As an added layer of protection, consider switching your main Windows 10 account to a Standard User for everyday tasks and use an admin account only when you genuinely need to (say, to install or update software).

The easiest way to achieve this is to create a new admin account first. Click Start, Settings, Accounts, then 'Family & other users'. Click 'Add someone else to this PC', then follow the prompts to create a new local account. Once created, select the new account and click 'Change account type', select Administrator and click OK. Next, log in with your new admin account, go back to Settings, Accounts, then 'Family & other users'. Here, select your original account, click 'Change account type', then select



Change from Administrator to a Standard User account to stop malware running

Standard User (see screenshot above) and click OK.

6 Switch your browser and password manager

If a hacker does exploit a new vulnerability in Windows 10, your web browser is likely to be one of the most common targets. Therefore, we'd strongly suggest switching to a more robust browser, such as Brave (<https://brave.com>), which offers powerful privacy features, including private windows with **Tor**.

We'd also advise moving your passwords and logins somewhere secure. Instead of saving them in Edge or in your Microsoft account, for example. Use an independent password manager, such as Bitwarden (www.snipca.com/56329), winner of a Gold Award in our recent group test (see Issue 720, page 52), or runner-up Proton Pass (www.snipca.com/56334). These encrypt your data and sync securely without relying on any Windows tools.

7 Ditch Windows Firewall for independent alternative

Windows' built-in firewall has always lagged behind dedicated third-party rivals, in that by default it blocks only *incoming* traffic. More importantly, it depends on Windows updates to stay fully secure. So, now Windows 10 has ended, any newly discovered vulnerabilities could remain unfixed.

A safer approach is to use an independent firewall that monitors both incoming and outgoing traffic. This not only stops malware from getting in but also prevents any that's hiding on your PC from leaking your personal data to hackers.

Premium security suites like Norton 360 come with firewalls, but a solid free option is ZoneAlarm Free Firewall (www.snipca.com/56854). This works with Windows 10 and is regularly updated. You'll need to provide an email address during installation and put up with the occasional ad. **ca**

Buy our Windows 10 Survival Guide

Issue 718, containing our Windows 10 Survival Guide, sold out in many shops across the country. If you missed it, there's still time to buy a back issue from www.snipca.com/56596. We don't have many left though, so please hurry.



Subscriptions we've cancelled in 2025



Tech firms are increasingly locking you into contracts for services you can get cheaper (or free) elsewhere. Three *Computeractive* writers tell you what they've recently cancelled and what they've moved to



DANIEL BOOTH

WHAT I'VE CANCELLED

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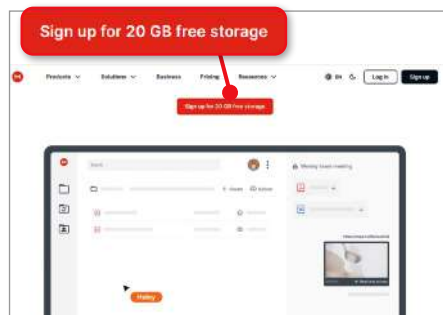
When I signed up to Microsoft 365 Personal

in 2022 I thought I'd easily fill its 1TB storage with videos, but I've got nowhere close. I still like Excel and Word, but not so much that I'm prepared to pay for them. And Copilot is yet to convince me that it's more than a glorified Clippy. Paying £84.99 a year for all this was madness.

AND WHAT I SWITCHED TO

Mega, LibreOffice, Google Gemini

I now spread my files across free online storage supplied by (at the last count) eight different companies. Mega (<https://mega.io>) offers the most (20GB, see screenshot below), followed by Google (15GB) then pCloud (10GB). LibreOffice is a decent alternative to Microsoft Office, though I still use the free online versions of Excel and Word. I won't miss Copilot at



Mega gives you 20GB of storage for free

all. Google's Gemini AI assistant works much better when I use Docs, Sheets and Slides, although it hasn't boosted my productivity that much.

WHAT I'VE CANCELLED

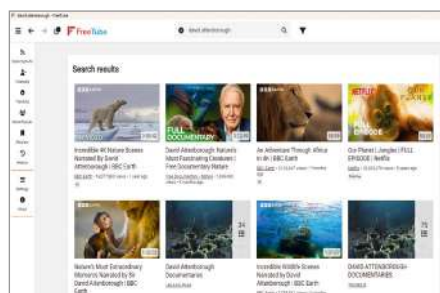
YouTube Premium

Late last year I finally caved in to YouTube's advert onslaught and subscribed to Premium to avoid them. But I now only watch YouTube in short bursts on my PC, not lounging on my sofa for hours. I'll put up with 30-second ad breaks when watching five-minute clips, so have cancelled the £12.99 monthly subscription.

AND WHAT I SWITCHED TO

YouTube (free) with FreeTube

While I'm more tolerant of ads, they're still too frequent, intrusive, noisy and vulgar. The program FreeTube (www.snipca.com/56950, pictured below) blocks these by creating an alternative 'front end' for YouTube. You can search as



FreeTube blocks adverts by creating an alternative 'front end' for YouTube

normal, create playlists and subscribe to channels. It doesn't always work perfectly, but it's better than paying £155 a year.

WHAT I'VE CANCELLED

McAfee Total Protection

I'm continuing to run a Windows 10 laptop, but it's entirely offline and I'll never browse the web on it nor insert any USB sticks posted through my letterbox by hackers wearing balaclavas. It therefore no longer needs McAfee's £24.99-a-year protection.

AND WHAT I SWITCHED TO

Microsoft Defender

Microsoft Defender lacks many of the features of advanced security suites, but it's improved a lot since the 2010s when I wouldn't have trusted it to guard a piggy bank. It will easily fight off the minimal threats my offline laptop might face.

I had to reactivate Defender, though, having disabled it to avoid clashing with McAfee's software. Do this by opening Windows Settings then clicking 'Update & Security' followed by Windows Security. Now click 'Virus & threat protection', scroll down to 'Virus & threat protection settings' and click 'Manage settings'. Finally, turn on 'Real-time protection'.

If you're running a Windows 10 PC online, turn to page 60 for advice on keeping it safe.

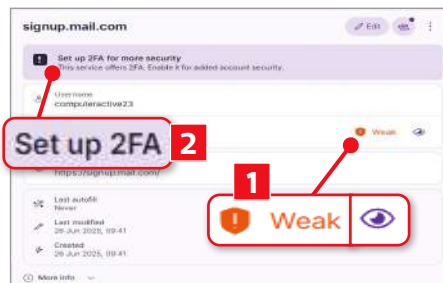


ROBERT IRVINE WHAT I'VE CANCELLED LastPass

I resubscribed to LastPass Premium while researching Issue 720's 'Ditch your password manager' Cover Feature (www.snipca.com/56904), but there was nothing new to convince me to stay. Once my free trial ended, my account reverted to the free version, which can be used only on a PC or phone – not both. I'm not going to pay £31.20 a year just to get multi-device support.

AND WHAT I SWITCHED TO Proton Pass

Bitwarden (www.bitwarden.com) is a fantastic password manager, but I switched instead to the free version of Proton Pass (www.snipca.com/56334), partly because its 'Hide-my-email' tool keeps my real email address secret from spammers. It also detects weak and reused logins in my vault (1 in our screenshot below) and generates stronger alternatives. It also highlights accounts for which two-factor authentication is available but I haven't bothered enabling 2.



Proton Pass has more features and better security than LastPass

WHAT I'VE CANCELLED Google One

When I signed up for a Google One Basic subscription in 2023, I thought it seemed like a steal: 100GB of online storage, advanced photo-editing tools and a VPN for just £1.59 per month (£19.08 per year). Last summer, Google discontinued the One VPN, citing 'low usage', and made the editing tools available to everyone for free.

AND WHAT I SWITCHED TO Google Photos

Google Photos (<https://photos.google.com>) is the main beneficiary of Google's waning interest in its One plans. The photo-storage service has inherited One's AI-powered image-editing tools, including the brilliant Magic Eraser.

I regularly use this feature to delete unwanted people from the background of my photos. As I'm currently only using 56 per cent of free Google storage (check yours at www.snipca.com/56905), I don't miss the 100GB offered by Google One.

WHAT I'VE CANCELLED ExpressVPN

When the UK went VPN-mad this summer following the introduction of the Online Safety Act, I reconsidered paying £11.92 per month for ExpressVPN. It was fast and reliable, but I was only using it on my PC and phone, mainly to stay safe on public Wi-Fi networks and unblock US-only content. I don't need a choice of 3,000 servers or 10 simultaneous connections across different devices.

AND WHAT I SWITCHED TO Windscribe

Windscribe's free plan (www.snipca.com/56933) has servers all over the world, including in the US and UK (if I want to watch BBC iPlayer on holiday), and connecting to them is as easy as clicking the location. By confirming my email address, I increased my monthly data limit from 2GB to 10GB.

I've installed Windscribe's apps on my phone and TV, to protect my privacy and disguise my location on those devices. Proton VPN's free plan (www.snipca.com/56932) is another good choice – especially for unlimited data – but Windscribe gives me more flexibility.



JONATHAN PARKYN WHAT I'VE CANCELLED Disney+

Recent price hikes (Disney+ Premium rose from £11.99 to £14.99 per month this September) combined with my children getting older made it increasingly difficult to justify paying for a subscription.

AND WHAT I SWITCHED TO Disney+ (but free)

While poking around in the 'benefits' section of my Lloyds Bank app, I learned I could get 12 months of Disney+ for free. It's the 'Standard with Ads' tier (usually £5.99 per month), downgrading my picture from 4K to HD and removing Dolby Atmos sound.

How much we'll save a year

Adding up the total saved gives us £689.06 over a year. Looks like we can afford a bigger Christmas party than usual!

Microsoft 365	£84.99
YouTube Premium	£155.88
McAfee Total Protection	£24.99
LastPass	£31.20
Google One	£19.08
ExpressVPN	£143.04
Day One	£50
Disney+	£179.88
TOTAL	£689.06

The adverts are a pain, but they're a pretty small price to pay for an entire year of guilt-free access to plenty of shows I love. It's a good reminder to check the perks in your bank and mobile accounts.

WHAT I'VE CANCELLED Day One

I've always liked keeping a diary, and Day One (<https://dayoneapp.com>) was perfect for jotting down my thoughts. It syncs across phones, tablets and laptops and is easy to use, but costs £50 a year. One day I jotted down, 'Why am I paying that?'.

AND WHAT I SWITCHED TO Apple's Journal app

I first considered switching to Apple's Journal app (pictured) when it launched in 2023, but it was only available for



Apple's Journal app is now available for iPads and MacBooks as well as iPhones

iPhones. With the recent release of iPadOS 26 and macOS 26, however, Apple finally launched the app for iPads and MacBooks too. That's when I jumped ship.

Journal does everything I need for free. It automatically syncs across all my devices via iCloud, lets me add photos and location data, and even suggests entries based on my recent activity. I do

miss some of Day One's features (such as web and Android support, and PDF export), but not enough to warrant the £50 annual fee. **ca**

Problems **Solved**

Our experts solve all your tech problems

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

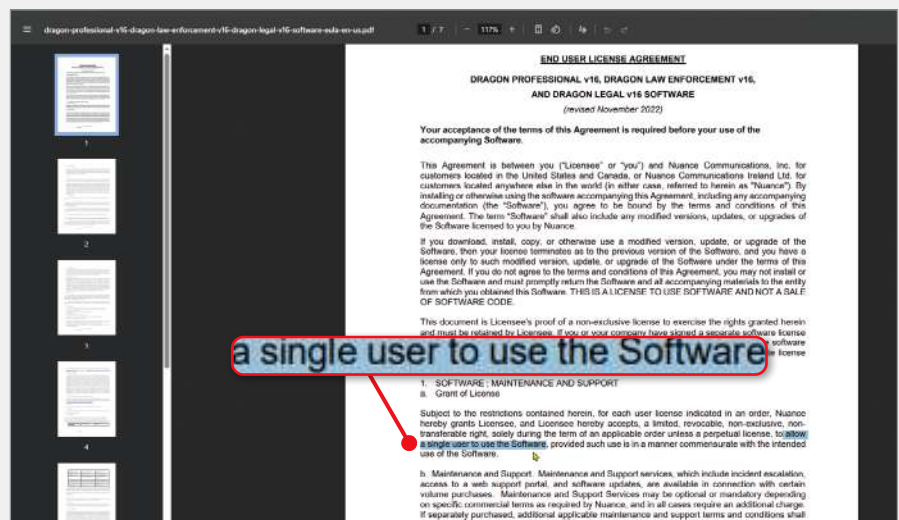
Will my software licences still work in Windows 11?

Q I have a query about software licences and whether they'll remain valid when I'm eventually forced to switch from Windows 10 to 11. A friend and I both use speech-recognition tool Nuance Dragon Professional (pictured below), each with a single-user licence. I believe this permits only one installation on one device.

In my case, that's my Windows 10 laptop. I can upgrade my laptop to Windows 11 because it meets the system requirements, but I need to know if my licence would still be valid on the new operating system.

My friend has the same single-user licence on her Windows 10 desktop PC, but because she can't upgrade it to Windows 11, she will be forced to abandon a perfectly good computer and buy one that runs Windows 11. Will she be able to transfer the Dragon licence from her Windows 10 computer to a new Windows 11 PC?

I can't find an email address for Nuance's support, otherwise I would



Nuance's single-user licence agreement doesn't specify how many PCs you can install it on

contact the company directly. If you can't tell me about Nuance's policy specifically, I'd still be interested to know the general situation with licences when upgrading from Windows 10 to 11, or having to abandon a Windows 10 computer for a new one with 11.

Tilly Dawson

A We always shudder a little when we receive questions about software licences because the answers can sometimes be painfully complicated. That's certainly the case with Windows and Office (Microsoft 365) software, because Microsoft sells multiple versions in various forms to different types of customer.

Thankfully, for many single-purpose programs, the situation is often a lot more straightforward. A licence for a single copy of a program typically allows the use of it on one computer at a time. Switching from one computer or version of Windows to another might cause compatibility problems but it isn't typically prohibited by the licence. In other words, if an app works in

Windows 10, 11 or even earlier versions, we'd expect the licence to remain valid no matter what you install it on.

That's the general situation, at least. In the specific case of Dragon Professional, we're confident that you have nothing to worry about when switching from Windows 10 to 11. The app's end-user licence agreement (EULA), which you can view at www.snipca.com/56558 (see screenshot above), makes no reference to the platform or operating system, which is pretty much what we'd expect.

What's more, Dragon states that the program is "optimised for Windows 11 and backwards-compatible to Windows 10", so it should work perfectly on either.

The same applies to your friend. Technically, the licence gives a single user access to the software, without specifying how many computers the user can install it on. So, in theory, she (or you) could install the software on more than one computer, as long as you use only one copy at a time.



You should be able to switch Nuance Dragon Professional from Windows 10 to 11 using a single-user licence

How do I stop my MiFi switching off?

Q I live quite far from my elderly mother. As she's quite infirm, I set up a system to help me monitor visitors. She's not interested in the internet, so I bought a TP-Link M7000 MiFi mobile-broadband unit and a smart doorbell. I set up the M7000 on a timer socket to prevent over-charging, and attached a solar panel to the camera.

All went well at first, with the camera recording and uploading everything. Then the alerts gradually stopped, even though I knew carers and the milkman had visited. I believe the device may be going to sleep. Restarting it fixes the problem temporarily, but it's not a permanent solution. How can I resolve this? Perhaps I need a different MiFi device that doesn't switch itself off.

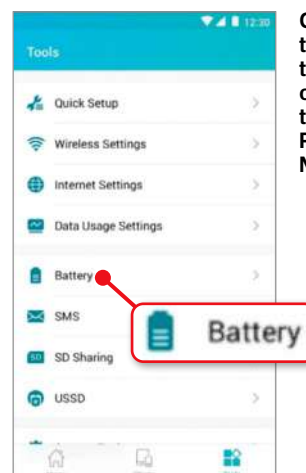
Brian Worrell

A Your particular MiFi device works more or less right out of the box once you've inserted a compatible data SIM. The default SSID

(network name) and password are printed on a sticker on the box. So in theory you can just switch it on, connect and think no more about it.

That's great, and TP-Link should be applauded, but it also means many people never check the device's administration pages. However, doing so is really useful, especially when you hit a problem like this. As MiFi devices are designed to be portable, they typically offer lots of power-management features. Indeed, your M7000 has such options built into its software, so we suspect that's the culprit.

There are two ways to open the admin page. The first is to visit www.tplinkmifi.net in any browser on any device connected to your MiFi. The default password is 'admin', so use that to log in. Alternatively, you can download the tpMiFi app for Apple iOS (www.snipca.com/56562) or Android (www.snipca.com/56563). Again, the device you use must be connected to your



Go to Tools then Battery in the tpMiFi app or web page to switch off Power Saving Mode

M7000's network, and the default password is 'admin'.

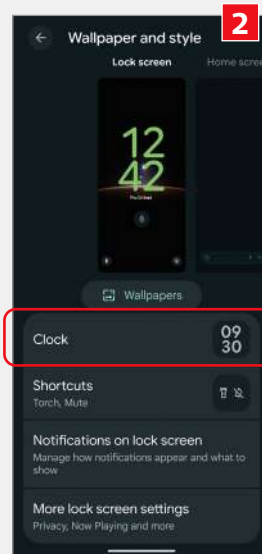
Next, in the main admin page, click (or tap) Tools followed by Battery (see screenshot above). Tap to switch off the Power Saving Mode slider, and hopefully that should solve your problem. While you're there, we'd also advise changing the default password by tapping Tools followed by System Tools and then Manage Password.

Can I brighten my Android phone's alarm clock?

Q My Pixel 9a phone now runs Android 16. Ever since this update the clock that appears when the alarm goes off is a horrible dull grey. This makes it impossible for me to see the time properly when I wake up, bleary-eyed and without my glasses. I've searched through the settings to find one that puts it back to the way it was, but to no avail. What am I missing? I tried downloading another clock app, but it was so loaded with ads it was impossible to use.

Michael Cornell

A Android 16 has adopted what Google calls its Material 3 Expressive design, which makes a lot of changes to the way Android looks. It has over a dozen key components and many elements within each of these, adding up to hundreds or possibly thousands of interface changes. What you're describing is just one of them.



The alarm clock's colour is determined by the system theme, which in turn can be modified by various settings in various places. We don't know what you've tried, but you'll find what you need in the 'Wallpaper and style' section of Android's

Settings app (see screenshot 1). Next, tap Clock 2 followed by Colour, then choose a colour. You can also drag the slider to set the intensity. Tap 'Apply', and the alarm clock should now follow your chosen theme.

How can I quickly download all my Google photos?

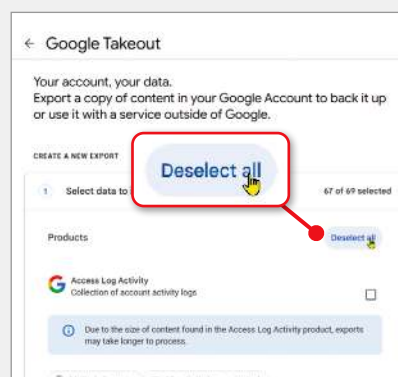
Q I want to transfer all my snaps from Google Photos to a portable hard drive connected to my computer. Is there an easy way to do this?

Allan Watt

A Yes, this is easy to achieve using the Google Takeout service (<https://takeout.google.com>).

First, log in using your Google credentials. Then, under the 'Select data to include' heading, click the 'Deselect all' button (see screenshot below). Now scroll down to find and then tick the Google Photos box. If you want to download only specific folders or formats, click either of the two buttons to the left to make your selections. Scroll down to the bottom and click 'Next step'.

Then, under 'Choose file type, frequency & destination', tell Google how you want to receive the download (an email link to a cloud drive such as Google Drive, say). Next, choose 'Export once' and leave the file type as '.zip', increasing the maximum file size to 50GB to minimise the number of files you have to download, then click 'Create export'. Now you simply wait for Google to deliver your ZIP files, which usually takes a few hours. Then use File Explorer to copy the photos to your portable drive.



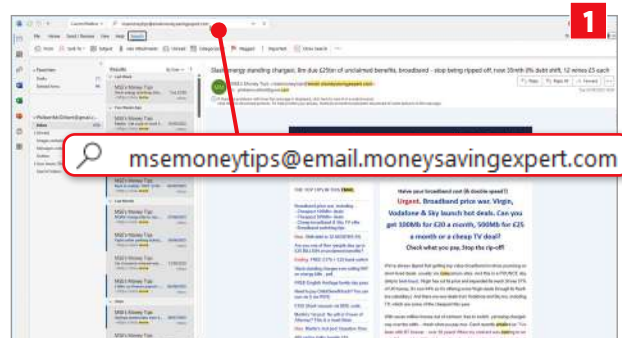
Click this button in Google Takeout, then choose the photos you want to download

How do I clear out my Outlook inbox?

Q I've been using Outlook for many years, and I want to clear out some of the dead wood that's accumulated in my inbox. For example, say I receive a daily newsletter email from a music shop using the same email address, such as newsletter@randommusicshop.co.uk. How can I bulk-delete all of them at once?

A We assume you're talking about the traditional desktop Outlook software. If so, you can achieve what you want quite easily, though we can see how it might not be obvious. First, click in the Search bar at the top. Then type the sender's email address before pressing Enter (see screenshot 1).

It sounds as if you may have messages going back years, so the search might take a while to complete. Once it has

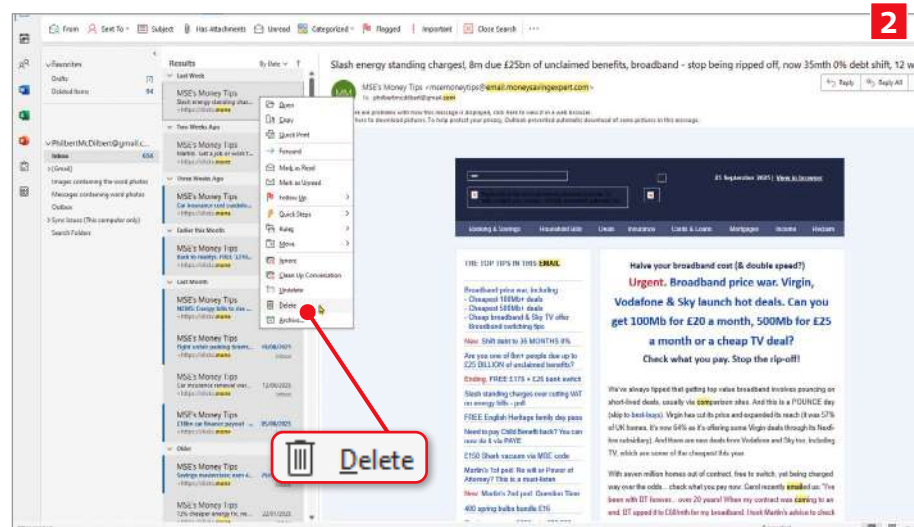


To locate all messages from a specific sender in Outlook for desktop, type their email address into the search bar...

Bill Angove

finished, click the header of any message in the Results, then press Control (Ctrl)+A to select all. Now press Delete (Del), or right-click before choosing Delete (see screenshot 2).

Alternatively, if you're using the Outlook.com webmail service, this has a very handy tool called Sweep. Just click to select any message from the sender, then click the Sweep button in the toolbar at the top. Choose an action, such as 'Move all messages from the Inbox folder' followed by 'Move to: Deleted Items', and then click OK.



...and when outlook has found all their messages, select them all, right-click and choose Delete

Q: Do I need a modem router for fibre broadband?

A: Issue 699, page 66 – find it on our 2024 Back Issue CD

Buy it from
www.snipca.com/53433



How do I free up space on my hard drive?

Q I often see a message telling me that my PC is running out of storage space. The C drive has only 50MB of its 102GB free, while my D drive has 890GB free out of 931GB. Running Storage Sense in Windows doesn't seem to make much difference – I sometimes gain the odd gigabyte or two, but it doesn't last long.

There are quite a few apps on my C drive, but the Move command is greyed out, and individually they don't seem very large. I don't even know what some of these apps are or why they're there. Can you give me some advice please?

Joy Davies

A We'll work backwards. As a rule, the Move command is available only for apps you have installed through the Microsoft Store app, not for those you've downloaded and installed from elsewhere. That's why the button is

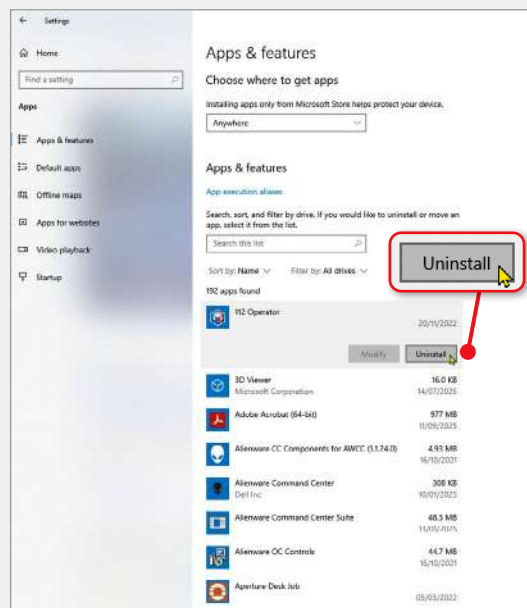
often greyed out or simply absent.

Next, if you're not sure what a particular app is, try searching for it in Google to find out where it came from. Then, if you decide you don't need it, click the Uninstall button (see screenshot).

Finally, although the Move button might not be available to help you shift apps from drive C to drive D, you can usually achieve the process manually, and it's not too difficult.

For example, if an app you want is installed on C and you're still able to download it (or you have the installation discs), click the Uninstall button to remove it, then reinstall it on your D drive.

According to the statistics you provided, your D drive has plenty of free space, and these days Windows isn't too



If you don't want an app, click the Uninstall button next to its entry in 'Apps & features'

fussy about which drive you install your apps on.

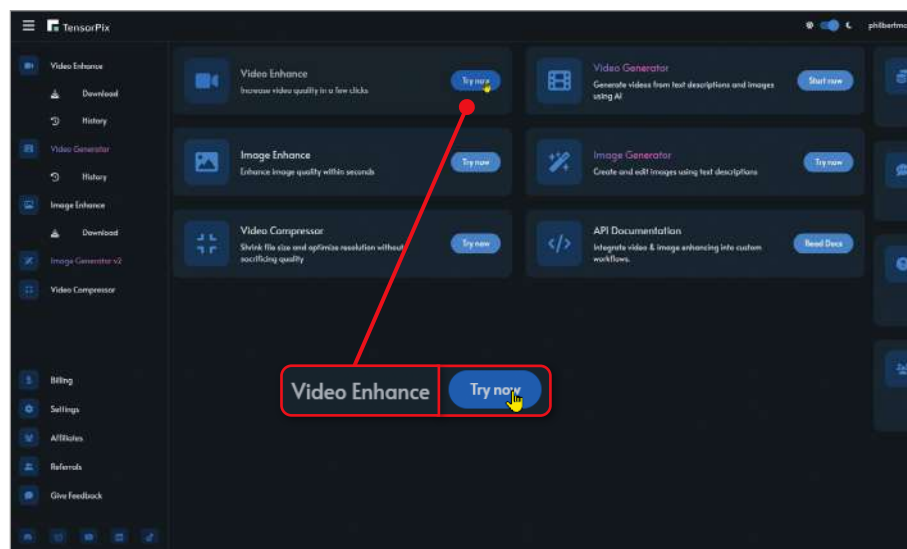
How can I make the video of my dog's rescue act less blurry?

Q I have a very special video of my dog (who has since sadly died) performing a 'lifeguard' rescue in the sea. Unfortunately, auto-focus wasn't switched on when I captured it, so it's quite blurry.

Is there any software I can use to sharpen it? I found something online that claimed it could help but it cost £29 a month with a minimum 12-month contract. I would have paid £29, but I can't justify £348. Keep up the great work with my favourite magazine!

Phil Lewis

A You sent us a link to the video, and you're right, it's very blurry. Not long ago we would have said there are no miracle cures for something like this. That's still true, but AI tools can do a reasonable job of making your video look a lot better. However, getting good



TensorPix uses AI to sharpen blurry videos, but it's often a case of trial and error

results is often a case of trial and error.

We ran your canine clip through TensorPix (<https://tensorpix.ai>) using its Video Enhance feature (pictured), and the first attempt produced a video that looked a little better. With a second pass, cranking up the AI Sharpen slider several notches, the footage started to look more like a video game than a home movie.

We imagine that with a few more

trial-and-error tweaks you'd end up with a film that looked better to you than the original.

TensorPix charges on a pay-as-you-go basis or as a monthly subscription. Credits start at \$2.50 (around £2), and each pass costs a credit or two, depending on which filters you apply. It's likely to work out a lot cheaper than £348!

Problems Solved

Can I connect my PC and monitor using USB-C?

Q I'm planning to buy a new PC with an Intel Core i5-14400F processor, nVidia GeForce RTX 5060 8GB graphics card and an Asus Prime B760-Plus motherboard, which has a USB-C port. I'll be using a Philips 24E1N1300AE/00 monitor, which has both HDMI and USB-C ports. Its main task will be photo editing. Will connecting the monitor's USB-C port to the motherboard's USB-C port give me full use of the Nvidia card, or will I have

The Philips 24E1N1300 AE/00 monitor has both HDMI and a DisplayPort-compatible USB-C connection

to connect directly to the card via HDMI?

Chris Prichard

A If you *were* to buy this particular setup, you would have to connect the computer to the monitor using either a DisplayPort or HDMI socket on the RTX 5060 graphics card, not the motherboard.

This is because not all USB-C sockets support what's known as DisplayPort Alt Mode, which is what you need to transfer video signals. According to its



specifications, the Philips 24E1N1300AE/00 (www.snipca.com/56559, pictured) does support Alt Mode. However, the USB-C sockets on the Prime B760-Plus motherboard do not.

If you were to connect the monitor directly to the motherboard using a USB-C cable, you would be able to use the monitor as a USB hub for a mouse and keyboard, connecting external storage or charging your phone, but not for receiving video signals from the PC.



Connecting the USB-C port to the motherboard would let you use the two USB ports as a hub

Can I still use my old Nook ebook reader?

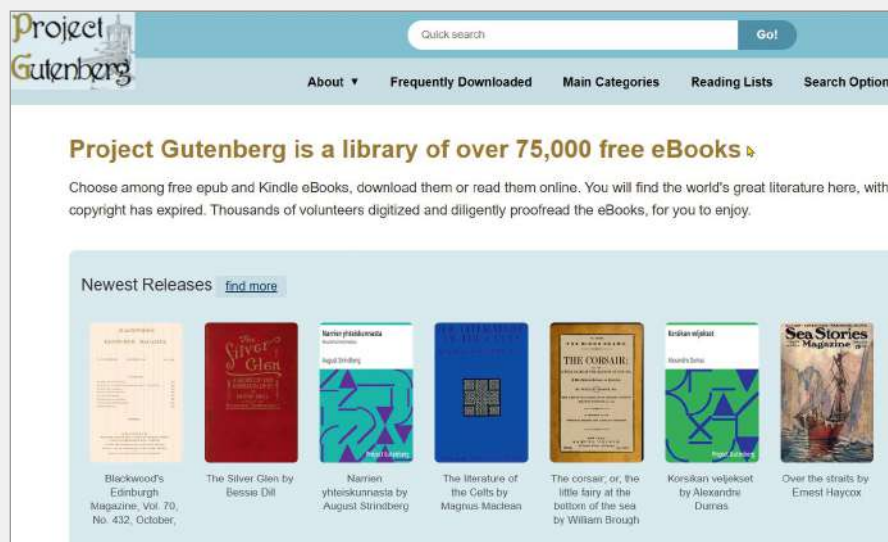
Q I have an old Nook BNRV350 ebook reader (pictured) that is no longer supported by its developer Barnes & Noble (B&N). I was wondering if I could convert it to another platform, such as Kindle or Apple? It seems a waste to throw it away, because it's still in excellent condition. Is it a lost cause?

Steve Law



A This model, also called Simple Touch, is approaching 15 years old, and B&N has indeed washed its hands of any ongoing support. However, you can still use the device to access content you bought before June 2024, using a B&N account registered on the company's <https://bn.com> website before June 2024.

As for converting your Nook to another platform, that's not possible. This doesn't mean your Nook is a lost



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cause, however, because you can use it to read ebooks that aren't protected by digital-rights management (DRM), provided they're in a compatible format such as EPUB or PDF. Just connect the device to a computer using a USB cable, then use File Explorer to drag and drop

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WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN...

Smartphone storage specifications?

Q It seems to me that phone manufacturers have changed the way they describe storage. Looking back at a couple of phone reviews from Issue 479 (published in 2016), for example, the Moto G4's specification states that it has '16GB flash storage', while the LG K8 is said to have 8GB. More recently, in Issue 709, the Samsung Galaxy A56 is quoted as having '8GB RAM' but also '256GB storage'. It looks as if phone manufacturers are now using the same specifications as laptop and PC makers to describe 'storage'.

Dave Chittim

A We'd say this is partly a misunderstanding and partly a shift in marketing focus. Let's start with the misunderstanding. Phones have always had two types of memory: RAM and storage. Even the earliest smartphones quoted how much of each type of memory they had. RAM is the device's own 'working' memory. The phone uses this to run the operating system and apps. Then



there's user storage, which is where apps, files and photos are kept. In almost all cases, a phone has much less RAM than user storage – in part because it's more expensive to manufacture.

Back in 2016, phone companies didn't tend to advertise how much RAM a phone had. This was largely because it didn't have much of an effect on a device's day-to-day performance, but also because the numbers were not very impressive. For example, the Moto G4 you mention had 2GB of RAM, while the LG K8 had just 1.5GB (see screenshot).

Now, almost a decade later, the amount of RAM in a phone is more of a selling

RAM specifications on older phones, like LG's K8, were never very impressive

point. This is because more RAM tends to improve a phone's performance when running demanding apps such as the latest AI tools. If last year's model had 4GB, say, then

boasting that this year's has 8GB suggests to would-be buyers that the operating system and apps will run more smoothly – and all else being equal, that's probably true.

So yes, your parting observation is correct. As smartphones have evolved to become ever more powerful and capable, the companies making them have adapted their specifications sheets to highlight how much RAM there is as a way of advertising potential performance increases.

Want to know the difference between technical terms? Email noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

Can I stop my printer wasting money and ink?

Q When my old Epson printer gave up the ghost recently, I replaced it with a Canon TS5150, because it seemed good value. It prints well but the colours come in a single cartridge, so if one colour runs out I have to replace the lot. This is working out to be quite expensive, not to mention wasteful. Are there any single cartridges that would fit this printer, allowing me to replace the colours individually?

Peter Brice

A This printer model has slots for just two separate ink cartridges – one containing black ink and the other filled with cyan, magenta and yellow pigments. This is actually a fairly common design because it allows printer companies to minimise manufacturing costs while

maximising ink profits. So no, you can't buy individual ink tanks for your TS5150.

Thankfully, there are other options that will help you save money, reduce waste or both. One is to buy 'remanufactured' cartridges, which are used cartridges that have been recycled, refilled and repackaged for sale. These are generally reliable and are easy to find.

For example, Tesco sells a remanufactured CL-541XL cartridge for your printer for £18 (www.snipca.com/56560, pictured left), which is around £7 cheaper than Canon's original.

Alternatively, you can save even more money and minimise waste by refilling the cartridge yourself. This process can be messy but it's not particularly difficult.



A remanufactured ink cartridge from Tesco costs a lot less than a Canon one

If you pull back the sticker on your Canon tri-colour cartridge, you'll see three filling holes. You simply insert an ink-filled syringe into each hole and squeeze the plunger to saturate the sponge. You can buy a refill kit from Refresh Cartridges for under £7 (www.snipca.com/56561), for example.

Next Issue

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- Why can't I create a recovery drive?
- What's up with Windscribe?
- Can I recover my Money backup?
- ...And many more

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Can I move my notes from Evernote to Joplin?

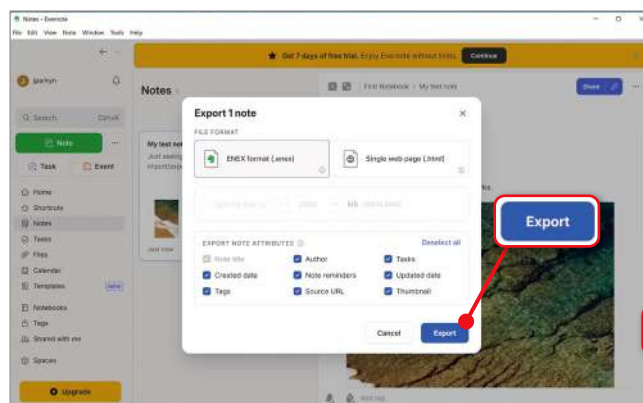
Q In Issue 716 (page 62) Nick Peers explained his decision to replace Evernote with Joplin (Joplin (<https://joplinapp.org>), which supports a wide range of note types. I've toyed with the idea of leaving Evernote, but I'm worried about losing the notes I've created. How can I use the notes I've made in Evernote in Joplin?

Jeremy Allum

A Thankfully, this is pretty straightforward – you just need to export the notes you want to keep from Evernote, then import them from within Joplin.

First, launch the Evernote desktop app, select the notebook(s) or specific notes you want to export, then right-click your selection and select Export. In the Export box that opens, select the ENEX format option, leave all the other settings as they are and click Export (see screenshot below). Save the file somewhere safe.

Next, launch Joplin and click File, Import, then select 'ENEX – Evernote Export File (as HTML)' (see screenshot below right) and browse for the file you exported from Evernote. Click it, then click Open and Joplin will import the note or notebook. Photos and tables you've added to your notes will be carried across, but fonts and formatting may look different.



Right-click your notes in Evernote then choose Export...

Can I use my Outlook.com email for Windows 10's updates?

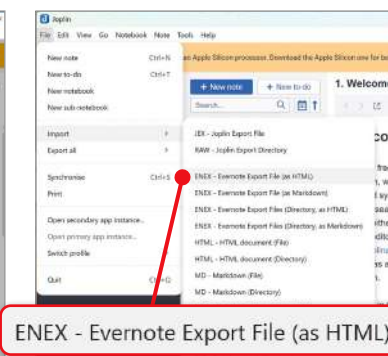
Q After reading Issue 718's 'Windows 10 Survival Guide' I have two questions. First, can I use my aname@outlook.com email address to log into Microsoft's Extended Security Update (ESU) scheme?

And second, I've read that home users can use the purchased ESU on up to 10 – and that would cover me and my wife. But would she need to log in on her computer with my aname@outlook.com account to access the extended updates?

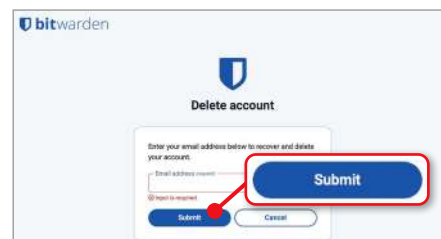
Dave Symes

A If your Outlook.com email address is the one you use for your Microsoft account, then yes – you can use it to enrol your PC in the ESUs. Do this by clicking Start, Settings, 'Update & security', Windows Update, then looking for the prompt to enrol, and following the remaining steps we published in Issue 718. If you don't see the prompt to enrol, keep checking for and installing any available Windows updates until it appears.

As for your wife's computer, it's simplest if she enrolls her computer separately under her own Microsoft account. If she doesn't have a Microsoft account, she'll be prompted to create one during enrolment.



...and in Joplin click Import then select 'ENEX – Evernote Export File (as HTML)'



Delete your Bitwarden account by typing your email address and clicking Submit

Why can't I register my email with Bitwarden?

Q I've put off using a password manager for years, but finally decided to follow your advice after reading Issue 720's Cover Feature 'Ditch your password manager'. I tried to install your Gold award-winning choice Bitwarden (www.snipca.com/56329), but when I gave it my email address during the activation process, it said it had already been registered. I couldn't get any further. Should I now be extremely concerned? And if not, how on earth do I get Bitwarden?

Graham Lovelock

A It's probably nothing to worry about. Maybe you tried Bitwarden years ago and forgot about it? Or perhaps someone else with a very similar email address mistyped when they signed up for a Bitwarden account. You could try going to <https://vault.bitwarden.com>, entering your email and clicking 'Log in'. If you did try Bitwarden in the past, clicking 'Get master password hint' here may well jog your memory.

If that fails, delete the Bitwarden account associated with your email address, then start again. Go to www.snipca.com/56803, then enter your email address into the box and click Submit (see screenshot above). You'll receive an email from Bitwarden with a link to delete your account. Next, set up a new account from scratch.

Jargon Buster

1080p High-definition video: 1920x1080 pixels.

2K A screen with 2048x1080 pixels.

3G/4G/5G Technologies that deliver faster mobile broadband.

32bit A measure of how much data a PC can process at once. Most older computers are 32bit, more modern ones are 64bit.

4K Video with a resolution of at least 3840x2160 pixels.

Access Point mode Allows a router or other Wi-Fi-enabled device to connect to your main router via Ethernet and broadcasts signals, extending your network.

Administrator Someone who can make changes to a computer that will affect others who also use it.

APK Android Package Kit. The file format Android uses to install apps.

ARM Processors that are more energy-efficient than those made by AMD and Intel.

Benchmarking Comparing software and products with an accepted standard.

Buffering Downloading a certain amount of data before starting to play a video. Can cause delays to your streaming.

Cache A temporary space for storing information.

cd/m² Candela per square metre. Standard unit of brightness.

Chatbot An AI program designed to recreate conversation with human users.

Client A program that acts as an interface between PC and server.

Code Written instructions that tell software how to execute tasks.

Core Units on a processor that carry out program instructions.

Cross-talk Means by which different components of a system communicate and transfer data with each other.

Dark mode Showing white text on a black background.

Dark web Websites that can only be accessed using special software such as the Tor Browser.

DDR5 The newest, fastest type of computer memory.

Decode Convert one file format into a simpler format that's easily played back by other systems.

Depth of field The distance between the closest and farthest objects that appear acceptably sharp.

DirectX A Microsoft technology required to run games in Windows.

DisplayPort A socket for connecting monitors.

Distro A version of the Linux OS and the programs that go with it.

Dolby Atmos Surround-sound technology that adds 'height' to the audio through speakers built into the top of devices.

Dolby Vision Dolby's HDR screen technology.

Driver A file that tells Windows how to work with an external device.

DRM Digital Rights Management. Software that limits the copying of a file.

Dual-band router A Wi-Fi router that operates on 2.4 and 5GHz.

eARC Lets you transmit the original full-resolution audio signal through an HDMI cable to reproduce the best sound.

Encode Convert media files to a new format, such as WAV audio files to MP3.

End-to-end encryption A way of encrypting messages so only the sender and recipient can read them.

EPUB A file format used by many popular ebook readers.

eSIM A virtual SIM card that's built into a phone.

Ethernet A standard used for almost all wired computer networks.

EXE A program file designed to run in Windows.

FAST TV channels that stream content online for free but are supported by adverts.

Firmware Software stored on hardware to control its operation.

Forked When developers take source code from software to make another related program.

Full array Screens that have LEDs spread evenly, rather than just around the edges.

GHz Gigahertz. A measure of how many instructions a chip can process per second. 1GHz is equal to 1,000MHz.

GPU Graphics Processor Unit. A chip designed to create 3D graphics.

Graphics card A component in a computer that produces the image shown on the monitor.

HDMI High-definition media interface. A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals.

HDR10+ High-dynamic range 10. Current industry standard for TVs.

HDR Screen technology that improves the range of luminance between the darkest and brightest parts.

HLG A high-definition TV format jointly developed by the BBC and Japanese broadcaster NHK.

HTML Hypertext Markup Language. The language used to write most web pages.

HTTP Hyper Text Transfer Protocol. The technology that sends data between your browser and the web.

HTTPS Secure version of HTTP.

HVA Horizontal Vertical Alignment. A type of LCD panel that offers better viewing angles and contrast than standard TN panels.

Hz Hertz. Measures the frequency something happens: 1Hz equals once a second.

IP address Internet Protocol address. A unique set of numbers used to identify computers and websites on the internet.

IP64 Protection rating that means no dust can get into a device, nor water splashes from any direction – though it's not fully waterproof.

Jailbreak Modifying an iPhone, iPod or iPad to get around Apple's restrictions.

LCD Liquid-crystal display. The technology used to create almost all flatscreen monitors.

MagSafe A magnetic technology from Apple that allows for wireless charging and attaching accessories.

mAh Milliamp hours. A unit that measures (electric) power over time. The higher the mAh, the longer a battery will last.

MiFi A service that creates hotspots out of phones' 3G and 4G networks.

Mirror To display on your TV what's on your PC or tablet screen.

MWh Megawatt hour. Equal to 1,000 kilowatts of electricity used continuously for one hour.

NPU Neural processing unit. Specialised chip designed for performing AI tasks.

OLED A thin-film organic light-emitting diode used in PC and TV screens.

Partition A large hard drive can be split into two or more partitions or 'virtual' drives.

PCIe A faster version of PCI – a slot on the motherboard for expansion cards, such as for sound and memory.

Phishing A form of internet fraud that tries to trick you into revealing personal details.

QLED Screen technology that uses nanoparticles called quantum dots to boost brightness and colour.

QR code Quick Response code. A barcode that can be read using smartphones.

Read To access data saved on a computer.

Refresh rate Measured in Hertz (Hz), the number of times per second that the image on your monitor is redrawn.

Refurbished A second-hand device that has been repaired by its manufacturer so that it can be resold and reused.

Roaming charge Fee incurred for using your phone to receive data through overseas mobile networks.

RSS A format for automatically distributing news headlines and other content from the web.

SCART A standard connector for video and audio signals.

SD card Secure Digital card. A popular type of memory card.

Sideload To install apps without using the official Android store.

SIM Subscriber Identity Module. The smart card used by all digital mobile phones.

SIM-only A phone package in which you pay only for the data, calls and texts. You have to buy the phone yourself.

SIM-swap A scam where criminals trick your mobile provider into moving your phone number on to their SIM.

SSID Service Set Identifier. A name used to identify a wireless network.

Subwoofer A special type of speaker designed to reproduce deep bass sounds only.

System restore point Collection of system files stored on a given date and time to which Windows can revert if a problem occurs.

Thread Smallest sequence of instructions that can be managed by your processor.

Tor Browser A web browser designed for anonymous surfing.

Two-factor authentication A system that uses two different means to identify the user.

Upscale Creating a larger version of a photo without sacrificing clarity and detail.

USB 2.0/3.0/3.1/3.2/4.0 Faster successors to USB.

USB-C A connector that's reversible.

Virtual computer A software-based computer running inside another computer. Often used to emulate another operating system.

Virtual desktop System of multiple desktops you can switch between from your main desktop.

VPN Keeps all internet communication safe and private.

WAN Wide Area Network. Exists over a large geographical area.

WEP Wired Equivalent Privacy. A security algorithm for 802.11 Wi-Fi networks.

Wi-Fi 5 A standard for wireless that allows for much higher transfer speeds than 802.11n.

Wi-Fi 6 10 times faster than Wi-Fi 5. Also called 802.11ax.

Wi-Fi 6E Wi-Fi 6 extended to include the 6GHz band.

Wi-Fi 7 Faster successor to Wi-Fi 6, with an estimated maximum speed of around 46Gbps.

Wi-Fi Direct A Wi-Fi standard letting devices connect without requiring a wireless access point.

WPA Wi-Fi Protected Access. A secure form of protection for wireless networks.

Write Save data to a hard drive.

ZIP file A file that contains compressed documents or files.

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2		Full Fibre 150	£26.00 Prices may vary during your contract	24 Months	150Mbps avg. speed	£80 Gift Card	£232.00
3		Full Fibre 500	£27.00 £21.00 from 1st April 2026	24 Months	500Mbps avg. speed	£125 Gift Card	£220.00
4		M500	£21.99 £25.99 from April 2026 bill	24 Months	500Mbps avg. speed	N/a	£291.88

Go to www.snipca.com/55902 for full details

* Payments based on 12x monthly cost (including price rise) minus reward value

*Reward subject to change. Available as of 5th November 2025.



Easy when you **Know How**

Looking for a new way to copy files between his PC and phone, **Robert Irvine** tries to...



Transfer files by scanning codes

I'm old enough to remember when the only way to transfer files from one device to another was using a floppy disk. Surprisingly, you can still buy 'floppies' from Amazon – £25 for a pack of 10 (www.snipca.com/56824) – which is handy for rescuing files from an ancient PC, provided they're smaller than 1.44MB.

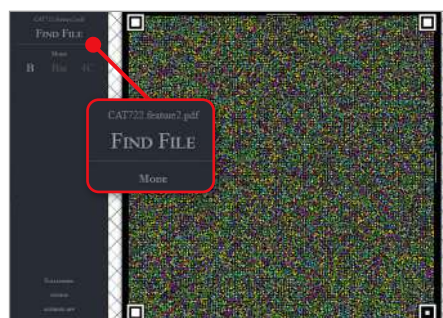
“

Wormhole supports files up to 10GB and you don't need to create an account

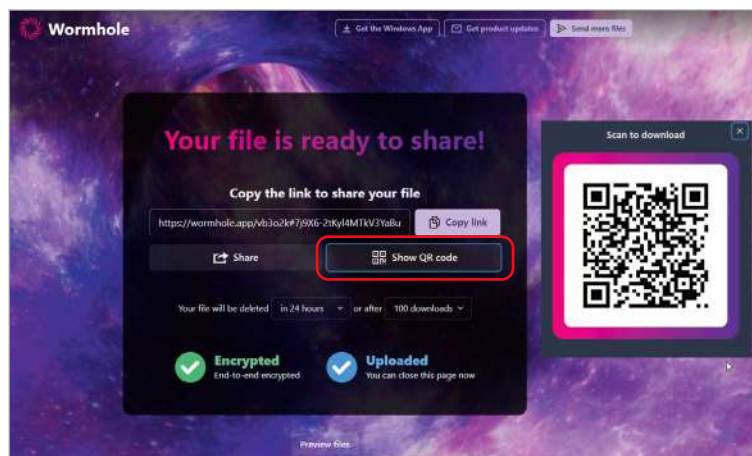
”

These days, we're spoilt for choice for file-transfer methods: USB stick, SD card, email, online storage, Bluetooth and more. But one option I'd never tried is scanning a code – such as a barcode or QR code. This is best suited to moving files from your PC to your phone, using the latter's camera. I decided to give it a go.

First I tried a tool called Libcimbar (www.snipca.com/56825), for the sole reason that it looked quirky and



Libcimbar encodes files as an animated grid of colour tiles



Robert used the QR code created by Wormhole to transfer a video file from his PC to his phone

interesting when I read about it online. Rather than a typical black-and-white QR code, it **encodes** files as a 'high-density 2D barcode' that stores data in an animated grid of colour tiles. Scanning this code with your phone's camera 'beams' the file from your PC browser, even without an internet connection.

I installed Libcimbar's **decoding** app, CameraFileCopy (www.snipca.com/56826), on my Android phone – it's not yet available on iOS. This is free with no ads or in-app purchases – in fact, there's nothing to it all aside from the decoding scanner.

I then visited Libcimbar's website (www.cimbar.org) in my desktop browser and clicked 'Tap to start'. In the left-hand panel that opened, I clicked 'Find file' (see screenshot below left) and browsed to then selected a PDF from my hard drive.

Libcimbar encoded the uploaded file as a densely packed square of random colour characters, which jiggled about in a nausea-inducing manner. It's how you might have imagined TV static to look when you upgraded your black-and-white telly to a colour one in the 1970s – except, of course, it didn't because the static was still monochrome.

I scanned the code using the CameraFileCopy app, and after a few seconds the file appeared on the Downloads screen on my phone, where I tapped Save. I opened the PDF and noted that its

content had transferred intact.

On the downside, Libcimbar can only encode files of up to 33MB in size, and its vibrating colour grid gave me a headache. So I moved on to another option, the easier-to-spell Wormhole (www.snipca.com/56827).

This file-transfer service supports files of up to 10GB with no need to create an account or install an app. It protects data you share using **end-to-end encryption** and its links expire after 24 hours.

I uploaded a 44MB video to the Wormhole website and, after displaying a space-themed animation as if I were entering said wormhole, it generated a link to the file. This was accompanied by a set of sharing options and a 'Show QR code' button (see screenshot above). I clicked this, scanned the code with my phone's camera and then tapped the link that appeared on-screen.

This loaded the Wormhole site in my mobile browser, where I tapped 'Download file' to save the video to my phone. Although the transfer required an extra step compared with Libcimbar, Wormhole's more generous upload limit, and the fact I didn't need to pop a paracetamol after using it, mean it's the service I'll be using from now on.

Need help transferring your files between devices? Let us know: noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

PHASE

Alpha Phase [IVY3]



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i5

Aurora

i5 Aurora [AUR2]



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